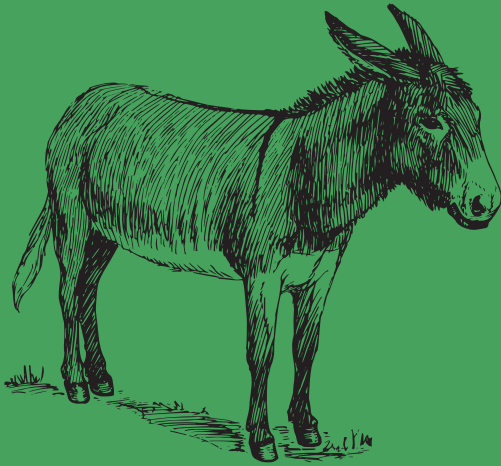


# The Tale of Lucius



Or, The Ass  
(Onos)

*Translated by*  
Joel C. Relihan

The Tale of Lucius  
*Or, The Ass*  
*(Onos)*

An anonymous Greek reworking  
(doubtfully attributed to Lucian)

of the lost, anonymous Greek  
*Metamorphoseis*  
(falsely attributed to Lucius of Patras)

*an American translation*

Joel C. Relihan

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# The Goals of This Edition

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This edition (translation with essay, notes, and index) of the Greek story *Lucius, or The Ass* (to give it just one of its possible names) is designed to be a freely accessible, independent translation (that is, not confined within an anthology<sup>1</sup>) that completes the suite of materials that I have published, both in print and online, for the benefit of readers and students of that peculiar Latin masterpiece, *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius. These materials include the print translation with Introduction, maps, and Index; a much fuller online index; a separate print edition of *Cupid and Psyche*, with illustrative parallel texts and an interpretive essay; and an online “Reader’s Commentary” to *Cupid and Psyche*. No one has translated both *The Golden Ass* and *The Ass* into English before; this version is undertaken to show more clearly, both through a meticulous translation and a

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1. Because *The Ass* is pseudo-Lucian, its presence in anthologies of Lucian’s writings has diminished over time. Paul Turner in 1957 published a translation of *The Ass* in the company of Lucian’s ever-popular *True History*; it is now reprinted, without *True History*, in William Hansen’s *Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature* (Indiana University Press, 1998). It was never in Turner’s Penguin anthology of Lucian (1961), though in the next year Lionel Casson included it in his *Selected Satires of Lucian* (1962). Turner’s Penguin was replaced by Keith Sidwell’s *Lucian: Chattering Courtesans and Other Sardonic Sketches* (Penguin Books, 2004); neither this nor C. D. N. Costa’s volume for Oxford World’s Classics, *Lucian: Selected Dialogues* (2005), includes *The Ass*. *The Ass* is well translated by M. D. Macleod (the editor of the Oxford Lucian) in the last volume of A. M. Harmon’s eight-volume Loeb Lucian (1967), but the most likely modern resource for a class on novel/romance is J. P. Sullivan’s translation in B. P. Reardon’s *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (University of California Press, 1989; second edition 2008).

thorough set of notes similar to those provided for *Cupid and Psyche* (not philological but exegetical, student- and reader-focused), what unites and what separates these two stories, and how they illuminate each other and the lost Greek *Metamorphoseis* that inspired them both.

Because *The Ass* seems so plain next to the baroque exuberance of *The Golden Ass*, and because *The Ass* has indeed suffered both in language and in plot through the process of reworking that created it, translations of it have tended to try to improve it, to mend its flaws, to take its bumpy language as an opportunity for clean rewriting, though J. P. Sullivan's translation, which reproduces some of the text's choppiness, is the most honest. That can lead to a kind of blandness, I think, that obscures both the rhythms and the charms of this frequently clumsy narrative. So what I offer here is a modest experiment in intertextual translation. I have brought to *The Ass*, I hope, the same sensibility and attention to word-by-word detail that I brought to *The Golden Ass*: I have kept my eye on Apuleius while translating the Greek, preserving similarities in vocabulary where possible and instructive; I quote parallel passages from Apuleius in the notes where the contrast is particularly revealing. I hope as well that these parallel translations will let readers both appreciate the achievements of *The Ass* (and they are real enough) and see *The Golden Ass* through new eyes.

The ideal reader of this edition has therefore already read *The Golden Ass*, preferably, though not necessarily, in my translation. The reader is invited, through this presentation of *The Ass*, to a new engagement with Apuleius's text. There are three main elements: 1) an opening essay, "How Does *Onos* Read *Metamorphoseis*?" which argues that the Greek text is a critique of and a complaint against the pretensions of its lost source, pretensions embraced by Apuleius; 2) a translation, accompanied by an explanation of the principles according to which I tried to preserve the details and flavor of the original; and 3) a set of notes, centered on the concepts of overlap and divergence, that will show how I reached my conclusions. Ultimately, I believe

that *The Ass* and *Cupid and Psyche*—the one a polemical extraction from the lost *Metamorphoseis*, the other an exuberant insertion into it—are in counterpoint, *opposite* reactions to the same text; this edition will offer the reader ample material for disagreement.

NOTE: For the sake of brevity and clarity, from here on references to passages in *The Ass* will be labeled by the Greek word *Onos*, followed by the section number (except in “About the Greek Text,” where textual variants are labeled according to Helmut van Thiel’s system of section and sentence numbers). Passages in *The Golden Ass* will be prefaced by *GA*, followed by the book, paragraph, and sentence number. Text ranges in *GA* are either by book and paragraph when referring to entire paragraphs (e.g., 2.1–5) or, when necessary, by book, paragraph, and sentence (e.g., 2.5.2–8, 2.3.6–2.5.1).<sup>2</sup>

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2. I should like to acknowledge the help provided at the very end of this project by Ellen Finkelppearl, both for her provocative new translation of *The Golden Ass* and for her thoughtful reading of the last draft of my introductory essay, “How Does *Onos* Read *Metamorphoseis*?”

# The Principles of This Translation

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There is no reason for there to be a universal theory of translation. A translation, like the text that it promotes, requires both an audience and a purpose; those audiences and purposes will vary for many reasons. A translation of *Onos* has unique needs and presents unique difficulties and opportunities, but it will be easier to talk about principles if we begin by talking about particulars. Let's start at the beginning, with the opening lines of our story, a staccato series of four clauses, of which the first three are gathered together to make the first sentence:

Ἀπήειν ποτὲ ἐς Θετταλίαν· ἦν δέ μοι πατρικόν τι  
συμβόλαιον ἐκεῖ πρὸς ἄνθρωπον ἐπιχώριον· ἵππος δέ  
με κατήγε καὶ τὰ σκεύη καὶ θεράπων ἠκολούθει εἷς.  
ἐπορευόμεν οὖν τὴν προκειμένην ὁδόν· (30 words)

It may strike some readers as strange that such simplicity could allow for much variation, but it does. Here are five twentieth-century English translations.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Graves (1951) ended his translation of *The Golden Ass* with a specimen translation of the beginning of *Onos* (Sections 1–5 and the beginning of 6: “I stop at the point

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1. *Onos* is excluded from the four-volume 1905 Oxford translation of Lucian by the Fowler brothers (Henry, of *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* fame [1926]; and Francis, to whom he dedicated it), and so missed its chance of entering into twentieth-century English letters in truly sophisticated dress.

where his sexual humour becomes offensively crude.”), just to indicate something of its style and manner:

I once travelled into Thessaly. The fact was that I had family business there with a man of those parts. A single horse carried me and my baggage, a single slave accompanied me, I followed the route I had determined upon. (41 words)

Here is the version of the ever-elegant Paul Turner (1957), using the fewest words:

I once had occasion to go to Thessaly on business in connection with my father's estate. I had a horse to carry me and my luggage, and one servant to look after me. On the way there . . . (37 words)

Lionel Casson (1962) adopts a more colloquial approach:

I once made a trip to Thessaly to settle with someone there a money matter involved in my father's estate. With a horse to carry me and the bags, and one servant walking behind, I set out along the main route. (41 words)

M. D. Macleod (1967) is hardly fanciful, as befits a translation in the Loeb series, but with the opening four words evokes the world of the fairy tale, and sets out at a leisurely pace:

Once upon a time I was on my way to Thessaly, having some business of my father's to transact there with a man of that country. I had a horse to carry me and my baggage, and I was accompanied by one servant. And so I was proceeding along my intended route . . . (52 words)

J. P. Sullivan (1989) is more honestly disjunct; but here too, syntactic honesty comes at the cost of extra length:

I was once on my way to Thessaly. I was involved in some business deal of my father's there with a man of that country. A horse provided transport for me and my gear, and one servant came along with me. Well, I was following my planned itinerary . . . (48 words)

You see how the artlessness of the text gives scope for various adornments: Graves has "the fact was," "a single horse"; on the other hand, he has the courage to call a slave a slave, and boldly omits an *and* before the last clause to reproduce the text's brevity. Turner omits mention of the man with whom the narrator will do business; the servant "looks after him"; the road on which he travels disappears. Casson's "made a trip" is neatly colloquial, as is "money matter"; "someone there" instead of "of that country" is a logical simplification; the servant "walks behind." Macleod takes "once" and turns it into "once upon a time," a good literary judgment for introducing a fairy tale, not a novel; "accompanied by" makes the relationship between slave and owner too chummy, perhaps. Sullivan starts in an abrupt way, and divides the text into more discrete units; "provided transport" seems overly prosaic, though "well" is a nice touch for reminding the readers that they are being addressed in colloquial language by their narrator.

Note how all of them describe the road differently: "determined upon," "on the way," "main route," "intended route," "planned itinerary." The Greek is simple, specific, and bland: it is *lying before*, a simple participle, without any marker that it is the *main* road; the word can mean "set" or "determined" in the sense of "fixed" or "established," but I think that, once the narrator has decided to go to Thessaly, the road there chooses itself, though reasonable minds may differ. The point is that a simple word has its nuances, and when translating in the context of an unfolding story, it is difficult to pinpoint at the outset just what our narrator

intends. All of these qualify as literal translations, but it is clear that we need both to probe the vocabulary and to investigate the advantages of simplicity while allowing the reader a reasonable anticipation of what is to come.

Here is my translation:

Once upon a time I was on the road from home to Thessaly. I had some financial dealings there—my father’s business with a man who lived there—and a horse was carrying me down there, my baggage too, and a slave was following along, just one. And so I was traveling along the road that lay before me . . . (59 words)

Even in these simple opening words there are serious issues of plot and interpretation that affect the translation. Why “home”? Because the verb ἀπήειν means “I was going away from,” and implies “from home”; the story will end with the narrator back at home—an important detail, as the narrator in *The Golden Ass* does not end up where he started. Why “once upon a time”? Because this story has been, as I argue in the essay, to some conscious extent reduced from a more expansive, sophisticated set of tales to a single obscene story—it is, after all, a sort of bawdy *Pinocchio*. Why “just one”? Because in Apuleius, Lucius the narrator sometimes speaks of one slave, sometimes more; the sentence ends emphatically with the word *one*, and so I emphasize it. I have not imported what was not stated or implied, but I have emphasized according to my understanding of the story.

Then there are matters of style and tone. Why the wordiness? Because using as few words as possible is elegance in English; wordiness here does a better job of conveying the Greek text’s lack of elaboration: “the road that lay before me.” Why use the word *there* three times? Once is the adverb proper (ἐκεῖ, “in that place”); once is implied in the adjective (ἐπιχώριον, “living in that place”); once is implied in the verb (κατήγε, “was taking down to that place”): together, they reinforce what I have already called a staccato

sentence. And why the em dashes and the commas, a fragmentation greater than Sullivan's? Because they mirror as best they can the sequence of events of the clauses, and the order in which we learn what the narrator wants us to learn. And note that the imperfect tenses have been preserved throughout: "was on the road," "was carrying," "was following," "was traveling"; other translators let some of these be simple past tenses, but the text is inelegant throughout in this regard (you can argue that such tenses are in fact quite accurate, and that it is accuracy in narration that is a form of inelegance), as it is in its overuse of the historical present, which I have also sought to reproduce as a general rule.

But there is one further consideration that guides the translation of the Greek into English, and that is the translation of the similar sentence in Apuleius (*GA* 1.2.1):

Thessaliam — nam et illic originis maternas nostras  
 fundamenta a Plutarch illo inclito ac mox Sexto  
 philosopho nepote eius prodita gloriam nobis faci-  
 unt — eam Thessaliam ex negotio petebam.

I was going to Thessaly on business. Why? Because it was from there that the root and stock of my ancestry, on my mother's side, was first made known to the world; passing through the great Plutarch and then through his nephew, the philosopher Sextus, it created our name and fame.

I might have said, "Thessaly — the root and stock of my ancestry, on my mother's side, was first made known to the world from there; passing through the great Plutarch and then through his nephew, the philosopher Sextus, it created our name and fame — that's the Thessaly I was going to on business."<sup>2</sup> Apuleius takes simplicity as an encouragement to elaboration, but the printed translation shows clearly the kernel from which the Latin text expands;

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2. I come to *Onos* now fifteen years after *The Golden Ass*. Hindsight suggests revisions I'd like to make in future printings of Apuleius.

further, it has the word *business*, which helps determine that *business* is the ideal word for the Greek, as opposed to Casson's "money matter," or other possible translations ("deal," "financial association," etc.).

Translation is always a laborious process; translating one text in such a way as to make its affiliations to a related text clear is more laborious yet. But there are two principles that guided my choices, principles I believe to be broadly applicable in any translation enterprise. First, just as the original author does, the translator *controls the flow of information*. This is not a neutral or impersonal process. The translator is constantly deciding how to restructure the original sentences into other sentences; frequently, translators have to fight against the nature of their native language and syntax in order to avoid giving the foreign text a specious accessibility or modernity. This approach is the sort of thing that Mark Polizzotti in *Sympathy for the Traitor* argues against, and it may well be true that in the world of contemporary fiction, translators aiming to find a wider audience for a new author will find that techniques that make the work opaque to the general reader are self-defeating.<sup>3</sup> But here, allowing the Greek to have its flow represented by a similar flow in English creates a distinctive style, one that allows for a better comparison and contrast to the text of Apuleius's *Golden Ass*.

Here's an example, where the narrator, now an ass in a stable and waiting for dawn and for the witch's slave-girl assistant to bring him roses, discovers that his host's house is under attack:

*Onos* 16.1: You see, when it was the depths of night, when silence and sweet sleep prevailed, the wall from the outside makes a knocking noise, as if being dug through, and in fact it *was* being dug through, and already there appeared a crack capable of admitting a man, and immediately a man was

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3. Mark Polizzotti, *Sympathy for the Traitor: A Translation Manifesto* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019).

coming through it, and another one just the same, and many were inside, and they all had swords.

GA 3.27.7–28.2: . . . throughout the neighborhood ring the frightened cries: *Robbers! Robbers!* There is no delay. By force is the house opened wide open and a swarm of robbers lays siege to everything at once; an armed conspiracy surrounds the house and its outbuildings, each and every one; when aid and assistance come flying in from every direction, it is a hostile force that runs to meet them and blocks their way. They are all equipped with swords and torches and they light up the night; both the fire and the sword-edge flare like the rising sun.

For all of his extravagance, Apuleius does not typically write complex sentences; rather, he writes elaborate strings of clauses. *The Ass* has not-so-elaborate strings of clauses. But in each, the reader deals with a steadily mounting accumulation of detail.

The second obligation of the translator is to *manage the expectations of the reader*. A translation is not a sequence of words, but words given an elaborate setting. In print, the cover illustration, the jacket blurb, the title page—all of the paratextual paraphernalia are there to guide the reader toward a certain understanding. Within the book itself, running heads and footnotes, essays and bibliographies, maps and index are all part of a complex apparatus designed to supply a reader with information about the text that is beyond the text. A translation rarely leaves the reader alone with translated words alone. This translation has different resources at its disposal in this regard, as it exists online, and the reader's experience is different physically and conceptually. But there are three key elements: 1) it is one of a number of texts and aids devoted to the understanding of *The Golden Ass* assembled in one place on the publisher's website; 2) it has a set of exegetical notes that, because of certain freedoms of the online format, can quote, sometimes at length, parallel passages from my translation of

*The Golden Ass*; and, most important, 3) like the translation of *The Golden Ass*, it attempts to create a serviceable style that reflects the nature of the whole text without being necessarily a perfect reflection of it on a sentence-by-sentence basis. My translation of the opening sentence, as discussed above, shows those principles at work: the hope is to present *The Ass* as having its own naïve and staccato elegance, something that would be lost if it were represented by crisp, clean, modern English prose.

For both the Latin and the Greek, therefore, I have sought a sort of stylistic impersonation: in the case of Apuleius, I couldn't always be alliterative where he was alliterative (or archaic, or neologistic, or anachronistic, or rhythmic), but alliteration was part of his style and so I built it into mine, being alliterative where I could; so too with *The Ass*, whose paratactical and accumulative style, which Helmut van Thiel views as akin to Herodotus's "strung-along" style, is represented very often by commas. Readers are within their rights to object that here and there I overdo it. Here is the death of the other ass in the robbers' service in my first draft (*Onos* 19):

So they divvy up all the baggage that it was carrying onto me and the horse, and that wretched beast, the companion of my captivity, the co-bearer of my burdens, they cut up with their swords, from the bottom, from its legs, and they push it, still gasping, over to the cliff's edge, and it disappears down below, dancing the dance of death.

This was too much even for me; the final version dials it back a bit. Of course, syntactical problems that reflect the process of contraction (both *epitome* and *abridgement* are misleading terms) need to remain. Consider this remarkable passage at the beginning of *Onos* 34, when Lucius learns of the death of the woman who had been saved from the robbers. Here *Onos* has clearly decided to excise some story about the couple whom Apuleius calls Charite and Tlepolemus and about whom he tells a long and

vicious tale of jealousy, murder, and revenge (GA 8.1–14). The contraction results in a clumsy and ungrammatical sentence whose features I preserve.

ἐπεὶ δὲ ἦν νύξ βαθεῖα, ἄγγελός τις ἀπὸ τῆς κόμης ἦκεν εἰς τὸν ἀγρὸν καὶ τὴν ἔπαυλιν, ταύτην λέγων τὴν νεόνυμφον κόρην τὴν ὑπὸ τοῖς λησταῖς γενομένην καὶ τὸν ταύτης νυμφίον, περὶ δεῖλην ὄψιαν ἀμφοτέρους αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ αἰγιαλῷ περιπατοῦντας, ἐπιπολάσασαν ἄφνω τὴν θάλασσαν ἀρπάξαι αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀφανεῖς ποιῆσαι, καὶ τέλος αὐτοῖς τοῦτο τῆς συμφορᾶς καὶ θανάτου γενέσθαι.

When it was the dead of night a messenger came from the village out into the field and the farmhouse, bringing word that this just-married woman—the one who had been with the robbers—and this woman’s husband, both of them, while out walking late in the evening along the seashore, the sea suddenly rose up and snatched them away and made them disappear, and that was the end of them, disaster and death.<sup>4</sup>

The more honest representation of the defects of the Greek makes for clearer understanding of the editorial process that created the text. There had been a story, a violently anti-romantic tale of the disaster that overtook an ideal couple, and *Onos* threw it out and rushed on. The function of the story was to motivate the next change of ownership for Lucius, and the author of *The Ass*, here and elsewhere,

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4. Sullivan’s translation: “When it was deep night, a messenger came to the estate and farm from the village with a report about the newly wed bride, the one who had been captured by the robbers, and her groom. Around late evening they had been taking a walk along the seashore, and suddenly the sea had risen and carried them away out of sight, and they had met their end in disaster and death.” Turner: “However, late that night news came from the village that the young couple to whom we all belonged had been swept away and drowned by a tidal wave, while walking along the beach the previous afternoon. So that was the end of them.”

seems to have no interest in any story that does not have Lucius as a participant.

And so I tried in translating *The Ass* to apply a sort of scrupulousness akin to that which guided my translation of Apuleius. Unlike Sullivan, I tried to keep all the vivid present tenses, which are certainly overused (they were overused in Apuleius as well) and tried to reproduce the force of all of the adversative particles, often redundant; I wanted to keep all of the imperfect tenses imperfect. But as an early reader of this translation pointed out, this had the unwanted effect of making an inelegant text appear unnatural, and the translation seemed to draw attention to itself more than to the text that it sought to represent. And so some compromises were made; some impulses were brought to heel: most important, present tenses in past narration were only kept when they seemed to correspond to real attempts at vividness; imperfect tenses are, idiomatically enough, from time to time just simple pasts.

Still, while not absolutely literal point by point, the translation does try to preserve the force of all the Greek vocabulary. I have tried for some consistency, both within *Onos* and between *Onos* and *Golden Ass*: just as in Apuleius, the ass tends to get “walloped” by “cudgels” and he “sticks his nose in”; “fool that I am” and “mind-boggling,” along with other items and locutions, are consistently translated. As in my translation of Apuleius, some indirect speech is represented by italics (cf. *Onos* 41: “Wicked! they called them and *Temple robbers!*”); characters with significant names often have those names translated (Mr. Straightarrow, Mrs. Crank); at *Onos* 45, a reference to unquenchable laughter (πάντες δὲ ἄσβεστον ἐγέλων) has its obvious source labeled: “unquenchably, as Homer says.” The reader will see that *Onos* cannot be dismissed as “not *The Golden Ass*”; rather, similarities to *The Golden Ass*, thus underlined, put the fascinating story of *Onos* into sharper relief.

# How Does *Onos* Read *Metamorphoseis*?

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Sometime in the first century CE there appeared a Greek text, now lost, called, at a minimum, *Metamorphoseis*—note the Greek spelling—an extended narrative about a young man turned into an ass who, after various degrading experiences and sexual exploits, ultimately regains his human form.<sup>1</sup> This story of transformations did not appear out of nowhere, as contemporary papyrus fragments and artistic representations suggest that a story of an ass that had sex with a woman was well-known and frequently told.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this soon-to-be-influential version was called *The Metamorphoseis of Lucius*, because Lucius is the name of the protagonist of the tale; perhaps it was simply *The Metamorphoseis by Lucius*, if the character in the story is the author as well. And why not? The Latin author Apuleius, who had this Greek story in front of him sometime between 150 and 180 CE and transformed it into what we call *The Golden Ass*, titled his work *Metamorphoses* also—note the Latin spelling—and, at the very end, revealed that he, as author, was to be identified with the Lucius of his tale, also turned into an ass and also restored. The link between the lost Greek original and its famous Latin descendant is the Greek text translated here, *Lucius, or The Ass* (here referred to by its Greek subtitle, *Onos*), also composed between 150

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1. The best introduction to the interrelation of the three texts discussed here is now the opening chapter of Tilg 2014, to whose arguments I am generally indebted.

2. Or perhaps these are themselves the products of the popularity of the original text.

and 180 CE, as clearly an abbreviation of some sort of the *Metamorphoseis* as the *Metamorphoses* is an expansion of it.

I would say, conservatively, that what we have is the following unsatisfactory state of affairs: *Onos* is the anonymous Greek reworking, frequently but doubtfully attributed to Lucian, of the anonymous Greek *Metamorphoseis*, blithely attributed to its protagonist, Lucius of Patras.<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, the foci of scholarly and literary interest in *Onos* have traditionally been authorship (Who wrote *Metamorphoseis* and who wrote *Onos*? Could either be by Lucian? Is Lucius of Patras a real person?), relationship (Is *Onos* an epitome of *Metamorphoseis*? How did *Metamorphoseis* inspire the more famous, more sophisticated *Golden Ass*?), and reconstruction (What did the original *Metamorphoseis* look like?). This brief essay does not seek to unravel the tangled skein of these three texts.<sup>4</sup> There are, to my mind, more interesting questions to be asked of a more strictly literary nature, for example: How is *Onos*, standing on its own, to be appreciated? Is *Onos* capable of the same sorts of literary sophistications as Apuleius's *Golden Ass*? The last twenty-five years have seen robust progress on this front, and *Onos* has in some ways been rehabilitated as more than a long and clumsy dirty joke by several scholars: Edith Hall (1995), Tim Whitmarsh (2010), Karen ní Mheallaigh (2014), Stefan Tilg (2014), Elizabeth Dollins (2015). *Onos* should be read as the antithesis of the ideal Greek romance, set not in the pre-Roman Greek past but in the gritty Roman world of the author's own time, a world of witches and thieves and soldiers and charlatans,

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3. I take the linguistic arguments of Nesselrath against Lucian as the author of *Onos* as definitive. Ní Mheallaigh (26–27 n.74) distrusts these arguments, given what she sees as the text's thoroughly Lucianic and sophisticated interests in "questions about culture and identity." But if *authorship* is an anachronistic term in a work that belongs to a "text-network," then "Lucian" isn't the author but more of a patron. She cites Whitmarsh as also claiming Lucianic authorship.

4. Mason (1999), who has studied these texts through a long career, offers an elegant and thorough treatment.

where truck farmers knock legionnaires unconscious, where women tell men how to have sex, and where both sex and justice are as naked and blatant as violence and death; where the narrator undertakes a psychological experiment to see if human consciousness would be retained in a man-turned-animal. Easily the most interesting and insightful analysis of *Onos* is to be found in an extended discussion by ní Mheallaigh (126–43): “Readers in search of a plot: *Onos*, *Metamorphoses*, and *The name of the rose*.” Drawing our attention to the fact that the Greek text of *Onos* is a crucial element in Umberto Eco’s novel, being the forbidden work that the translator Venantius was working on when he was murdered, ní Mheallaigh describes the interrelations in these texts, ancient and modern, of forbidden desires for sex, desires for knowledge, and desires for story and meaning; ultimately, all three speak to the indeterminacy of the search for identity.

I wish to complement these approaches with a caveat and an objection. First, while it is good to realize that *Onos* can be subjected to close reading and appreciated on its own without reference to Apuleius, and good as well to say that *The Golden Ass* does not have a monopoly on literary and interpretive sophistications but allows us to take in *Onos* as its literary partner, the similarities between *Onos* and *Golden Ass* in narrative strategies and gambits suggest that *Onos* inherits something from its source in this regard. In other words, the abbreviator did not have to be a genius even if the author of *Metamorphoseis* was. Second, *Onos*, when compared carefully to *Golden Ass*, reveals the skeptical process by which it reduced itself from the original *Metamorphoseis*. What I will propose here is that *Onos* be read and understood as a conscious reaction against *Metamorphoseis*, and as a critique of the literary sophistications and pretensions of its source.

As the outline of Apuleius’s *Golden Ass* is parallel to the outline of *Onos*—many of the same elements, and those elements almost all in the same order—the shorter work would almost by definition be trafficking similar themes and be susceptible to similar interpretations as the longer

treatment. But there are two key differences that point to different desires on the part of the author of *Onos*. First, *Onos* does not contain any stories related by other narrators; that is, there are no inserted stories like the tale of Thelyphron (*GA* Book 2), the robbers' tales (*GA* 4), *Cupid and Psyche* (*GA* 4–6), or the stories of adultery overheard at the mill (*GA* 9). The focus on a single, linear narrative results in a story necessarily less complex. Second, we can show at certain points in *Onos* that the text has been consciously, sometimes clumsily, truncated in order to omit stories present in the original *Metamorphoseis*. Three examples: a story told among the travelers is clearly cut from *Onos* 1 (but cf. *GA* 1.3–20); we are told at *Onos* 21 that the robbers told many tales, not reported (but cf. *GA* 4.8–21); the death in *Onos* 34 of the couple whom Apuleius calls Charite and Tlepolemus is certainly the mangled end of a much longer story (but cf. *GA* 8.1–14).<sup>5</sup> It is clear to me that *Onos* chose at certain points not to repeat storytelling that *Metamorphoseis* included. I would conclude then, on the basis of the Greek text alone, that *Onos* pares away elements that do not have Lucius, either as man or as ass, front and center; *Onos* thereby rejects the narrative complexity that comes from inter-related stories. This narrowing of focus changes the story. This of course should be obvious from the title, if in fact we have the actual title given by the author of the short version of *Metamorphoseis*: it is singular, not plural; it is specific, not generic; it is not polite, but vulgar. In other words, to transform “Tales of Changes of Shape” into “Lucius, or The Ass” is an aggressive act: not many stories, just one impropriety.

*Onos* does not have a religious ending, and the whole final book of *Golden Ass*, the Isis book, finds almost no parallel in the concluding pages of *Onos*, which ends as a bedroom farce. Isis in *Golden Ass* accepts and transforms Lucius; the woman at the end of *Onos* humiliates and dismisses him. That is, *Onos* rejects any notion of transcendence, any motion toward the sublime. Why say *reject*? Although the original Greek text *Metamorphoseis* does not

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5. See further in my notes on these passages.

survive, we know of it through the ninth-century Greek patriarch Photius, who read it and left his description of it. He said it comprised a number of books, of which the first two resemble a work he had read preserved among the works of Lucian, where it had a double title as is common in Lucian: *Lucius, or The Ass*. Photius says that *Metamorphoseis* was a serious work that took metamorphosis seriously. Here is his summary:

Read the various stories of *Metamorphoseis* by Lucius of Patrae. The style is clear, pure, and agreeable; avoiding innovations in language, the author carries to excess his tales of marvels, so that he may be called a second Lucian. The first two books are almost translations from Lucian's *Lucius or The Ass*, unless Lucian borrowed from Lucius, which, if I may hazard the conjecture, is the case, although I have not been able to find out for certain which wrote first. For it seems that Lucian, having cut down the more copious work of Lucius and removed all that seemed unsuitable for his purpose, combined what was left into a single composition, in which the words and arrangement of the original were preserved, and gave the title of *Lucius or The Ass* to what he had borrowed. Both works are full of mythical fictions and disgraceful indecency. The only difference is that Lucian, as in all his other writings, ridicules and scoffs at heathenish superstitions, whereas Lucius, taking quite seriously and believing the transformations of men into other men and brutes, and of brutes into men, and all the idle talk and nonsense of ancient fables, set them down in writing and worked them up into a story.<sup>6</sup>

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6. This is Section 129 (96b) of his *Bibliotheca (The Library)*. This translation is retrieved from the Tertullian Project: [http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/photius\\_03bibliotheca.htm#129](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/photius_03bibliotheca.htm#129). Note that the first word is to be understood as passive: "The various stories of *Metamorphoseis* by Lucius of Patrae were read."

It is clear from that last sentence that *Metamorphoseis* had an introduction, because Photius's language here overlaps the language of Apuleius's introduction. Photius seems to be referring to what he read on the first page: "the transformations of men into other men and brutes, and of brutes into men and back again" (πιστὰς νομίζων τὰς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων εἰς ἀλλήλους μεταμορφώσεις τὰς τε ἐξ ἀλόγων εἰς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ἀνάπαλιν).<sup>7</sup> It is then to be taken as a choice of the author of *Onos* that an introduction is avoided. Apuleius's introduction speaks of the interweaving of tales, of Egypt, and of the Milesian manner. *Onos* is not an interweaving of tales, says nothing of Egypt, and does not announce that it is about a change of a man into an animal and back again. We cannot read the text of *Onos* by itself as proclaiming a manifesto that it is not doing what *Metamorphoseis* does, but we can see, when guided by Photius's testimony, that *Onos* is offering a reorientation of the original as a single, stand-alone story that seeks to avoid the serious and the sublime.

Further, *Onos* is not appealing, as Apuleius explicitly does, to a reader's appreciation of text and subtext; the reader is not mentioned at all.<sup>8</sup> As for the Milesian manner: we cannot say for certain whether Milesian tales when assembled into a narrative necessarily represent the story and experience of a narrator, as they do in Apuleius, or whether they are merely tales told within a simple frame.<sup>9</sup> But we can suspect that the promise of Milesian tales, comic tales associated with sex and misadventure, would not

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7. The online translation missed the last two words: "and back again." Cf. GA 1.1: "The physical shapes and the worldly fortunes of mortal men, transformed topsy-turvy into other shapes, other appearances, and then made whole again, turned again into themselves in a back-and-forth bond and concatenation."

8. Mason 1999, 90. Nevertheless, *Onos* does create a sophisticated reader's experience. Lucius's search for pattern and meaning in the story is the reader's own; cf. Hall, 50: "The male consciousness of the first-person narrator, a professional writer, shares much, therefore, with that of the educated writer and reader of fiction."

9. The most up-to-date treatment of Milesian tales is Bowie (2013).

lead Apuleius's reader easily to expectations of serious outcomes. *Onos*, on the other hand, with its bedroom farce of an ending, would satisfy Milesian expectations. *Onos* is on this accounting a reduction of a *collection* of Milesian tales to one Milesian tale only, one with the expected sort of ending.<sup>10</sup>

Further, Photius's assessment is that *Metamorphoseis* was serious.<sup>11</sup> *Onos* clearly is not serious. If the first two books map easily onto *Onos* as we have it, then what was serious was in a subsequent book (or books), and we can conclude that *Onos* consciously refused to incorporate the serious ending of *Metamorphoseis*. What was that serious ending? Though it has long been assumed that Apuleius's Book 11 is entirely an innovation on his part, Tilg now contends, arguing from two other late-antique texts (the *Lausiaca History* and the *Syriac Infancy Gospel*) that speak of transformations of an ass or a horse back into human form in Egypt under the auspices of some divinity, that the serious ending of *Metamorphoseis* involved a similar transformation. Tilg concludes that the author of *Onos* "made a profane parody out of what had been a religious story before. The *Onos* would turn out to be a creative adaptation rather than an epitome" (Tilg, 10). On this account, *Onos* consciously decided not to follow *Metamorphoseis* toward that serious ending, just as it consciously decided not to interweave a series of tales.

These considerations lead me to take *Onos* as the work of an author who is protesting the use of Milesian tales in serious narratives. In effect, *Onos* takes the complexities

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10. Mason 1999, 91: "We know relatively little about Milesian tales, but the references we do have suggest that they dealt with erotic themes in an ironic way. The clever ending of *Onos* (56), where Lucius-as-a-man is rejected by the woman who loved him as an ass, is entirely consistent with what we know about Milesiae; it is part of Apuleius's play with our generic expectations that after telling us he is composing a Milesia, he changes the Milesian punch line of his source to a religious narrative."

11. I follow here the arguments of Tilg's Chapter 1: "The Model: Religious *Metamorphoseis*?" especially pp. 7–14.

of interwoven tales with a serious and divine conclusion and says, "Come on!" *Onos* makes out of *Metamorphoseis* a single Milesian tale, stripped of its pretensions. It is a protest against conventions of ideal romance and against the precedent that *Metamorphoseis* sets. This is not epitomization but a conscious decision not to tell a Milesian tale as a story complex; it is not a reduction of an original to the "zero degree" but a reorientation.<sup>12</sup> *Onos* reduces the narrative to an action that builds to a bedroom farce; it offers an ending that is spectacularly unedifying. The overall attitude of *Onos* toward its source is that the ass-man story cannot be used to support a literarily sophisticated, religiously infused tale of transformation. It is not abbreviation, but protest.

## A Modern Parallel

During the final phases of the composition of this translation, a new version of Apuleius's *Golden Ass* appeared that provides a powerful parallel to the approach that I am proposing here for *Onos*. It is a shortened *Golden Ass*, edited down by Peter Singer, animal rights activist and controversial ethicist, and translated by Ellen Finkelpearl, a renowned Apuleian scholar and committed vegetarian whose recent research centers on animals in antiquity. This abridgement does to *Metamorphoses* as I think *Onos* does to *Metamorphoseis*, removing practically everything from Apuleius that does not have Lucius as a focus (for example, the tale of Aristomenes in Book 1, the tale of

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12. Tagliabue in his concluding chapter (193–209) offers a number of ways of contemplating the possibility that the five books of Xenophon of Ephesus's *Ephesiaca* are to be read as a paraliterary epitome: "I envisage a very careful epitomizer who was able to maintain the structure of the original text, and abbreviated the original story by narrating its main motifs at their 'zero degree' rather than in the more expanded version which they had in the original text" (201). This pursuit of the zero degree is *not* what the author of *Onos* is doing to *Metamorphoseis*.

Thelyphron in Book 2, the majority of the robbers' tales in Book 4, all of *Cupid and Psyche* in Books 4 through 6, most of the tragic tale of Charite in Book 8, the tales of adultery heard at the mill in Book 9, and much more), though it also excises the elaborate embarrassment of Lucius in the Festival of Laughter in Book 3, Apuleius's masterpiece of plotting and surprise that is intensely focused on Lucius.<sup>13</sup> It also greatly shortens the Isis ending, which says much about Lucius after his transformation. Why does it edit so? Singer believes that *The Golden Ass* would have more readers if its digressions were pruned away, thus revealing a central narrative that displays "a remarkable empathy for the sufferings of the oppressed and underprivileged, whether they are slaves, an impoverished market gardener mistreated by a Roman soldier, or a donkey" (viii). This version stresses Lucius-as-donkey and seeks to enlist our sympathies in a tale of the suffering of animals. In one of the concluding essays, Finkelppearl speaks eloquently about *The Golden Ass* as an "animal text" (188–90); Singer, not surprisingly, begins his essay, "The Ethical Significance of *The Golden Ass*," with a section titled "Humans and Other Animals" (191–96).

The narrowing of the focus is therefore in the service of changing the way in which the story is read, as a provocation toward consciousness-raising concerning the treatment of animals then and now. Working backward from this version, a reader of Apuleius may see the unredacted *Golden Ass* in a new light: Was the text a protest against animal cruelty all along?<sup>14</sup> Most remarkably, though, the Singer/Finkelppearl version supplies a new ending. Here, in a freely improvised Epilogue, Lucius tires of his service to Isis as his love and longing for Photis grow stronger. He

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13. On the other hand, its interest in animals leads it to include one of the robbers' tales, the story about Thrasyleon, who put on a bear skin as part of a home invasion and was killed, acting like a bear to the end (GA 4.13–21; Singer/Finkelppearl, 50–57).

14. Hall (53) explicitly denies this.

cannot maintain his vows. He returns to Hypata, purchases Photis (who had been wasting away, missing him), sets her up in his hometown as a free woman of independent means, and waits for her to rediscover her love for him of her own free will. Then, somewhat in the manner of the Greek ideal romance, the lovers are reunited and marry happily. Fantastically, they then run what is essentially a rescue farm for abused animals.

This may not be Apuleius, and perhaps it is not fair to press the authors on a point that they admit is free invention, offered as a joke, but this radical rewrite is excellent commentary on *The Golden Ass* and on *Onos*. When Lucius in this abridgement turns his back on the promises Isis had made to him about his blissful postmortem immortality, finding the goddess's obligations in this world burdensome, he does so in the service of a new morality. This is a man who, having discovered a fellow feeling with animals, now finds his value not in the transcendence of, but rather in the acceptance of his nature as a created, physical being. Through his experience as an ass, he has learned the value of all life; his rejection of Isis is a conscious, moral, outward-facing choice, a rejection of an inward-facing personal salvation. What religion there is here is not Isiac but a much simpler sentiment: "He prayeth best who loveth best all creatures great and small."

This recasting requires a new, retrospective reading of Lucius's sufferings in *The Golden Ass*, not as a series of degradations that lower him to the ultimate depth from which Isis will raise him to the ultimate height, but as a series of chastisements that teach earthly wisdom, which raises the question: When he learns that wisdom, what is he supposed to do with it? Each Lucius has to decide how to live in the wake of the miracle he has experienced, how to bring that gift into the world. In contrast to the revised Lucius, Apuleius's unrewritten Lucius accepts the value of his transcendence for himself, but his willingness to make it obvious to all, as he goes about his lawyerly business, that he is a devotee of Isis, the Isis who promises salvation,

is actually performing a public service. We could say that the unrewritten Lucius encourages the world to look up; the rewritten Lucius advises us to look down.

This makes the Singer/Finkelpearl version a more humanistic text, and its Lucius a more practical hero. Humanity is not devalued because it is lower than divinity, but valued for what it is. I am reminded of the Cynic Menippus as he is portrayed in Lucian's *Menippus* (subtitled *Necyomantia*, "The Consultation of the Corpses"), who witnesses a decree passed in the assembly of the dead:

Whereas the millionaires commit in the course of their lives countless transgressions—plundering, assaulting, and in every way despising the poor—it has been decreed by the Council and the people, that when they die their bodies are to be punished just as are the bodies of other wicked people, but their souls, sent back up again into life, are to enter into the bodies of asses until they complete two hundred and fifty thousand years in this state, being born as asses from asses, carrying heavy loads for and being beaten by the poor, and only then at last are they to be permitted to die. (*Necyomantia* 20)<sup>15</sup>

Life in the body of an ass will teach the rich a lesson; with this in mind we can say that in the Singer/Finkelpearl version of *The Golden Ass*, our Lucius has learned his wisdom *quickly*. He has also learned the wisdom that Menippus finds when he reaches the goal of his underworld journey and asks the seer Teiresias what the best life for a mortal to lead is. His answer:

The way of life of ordinary people is best, and the wisest way to go. Stop investigating the heavens and looking into teleologies and first principles; spit on the syllogisms of those philosophers and

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15. Translation from Relihan 2021.

regard all such talk as nonsense; pursue this object only and above all: Make good use of the present moment and run on ahead laughing at most everything, seriously committed to nothing. (*Necyoman-tia* 21)

Here I think is the value of these contrasting endings as far as the end of *Onos* is concerned. Lucius there is transformed purely by means of the antidote, accidentally acquired, not providentially provided (*Onos* 54). He is grateful to the magistrate for keeping the audience in the amphitheater from thinking he's a witch, but he owes nothing to anyone for his change of shape. When he thinks, "What should I do about this?," as he has received no gift, he has no capacity to think in broader terms, social or moral. Therefore, he brings his miracle not out into the world, but only into the woman's bedroom. She is his only audience, and there we discover that he has gained no wisdom at all, no insight into his human condition. At the beginning, Lucius said he undertook the transformation into an animal experimentally, wondering whether he would retain his humanity through such transformation. (*Onos* 13: "I kept begging Palaestra to put feathers on me too, to smear me with that same drug and let me fly. You see, I wanted to learn by experience whether, after I had changed from my human shape, I would be a bird in soul as well.") At the end, the joke is that, after all, he had indeed retained, but merely retained, his humanity: unregenerate, not transformed, kept to himself, useless to the woman. And when he runs away naked to the ship, he isn't even a public spectacle; then he shares a private laugh with his brother. This helps us see just how narrowly Lucius in *Onos* sees himself and his experience. The author's general contempt both for transcendence and for human nature goes hand in hand with the specific absence of anyone to thank for the gift of those roses.

## Closing Thoughts

Apuleius sees in the frame story of the ass-man a folktale that in some sense describes the process by which a boy becomes an adult male, a process that is more clearly in evidence in the medieval *Asinarius*; Apuleius's surprising modification of the pattern is that his mature man takes his place in the world as a celibate, a priest of Isis.<sup>16</sup> Apuleius then uses that folktale theme to make the complementary and contrasting story of *Cupid and Psyche*, a tale of a girl becoming a mature woman, for whom love, sexuality, marriage, and childbirth are paramount.<sup>17</sup> The woman's Olympian marriage stands in contrast to the man's Isiac sexlessness.

In some sense the tale of loss of human shape and the regaining of human shape, the journey from animal to human, is a transposed story about the possibility of journey from human to divine. In Apuleius, this is obvious; both Psyche and Lucius rise to higher realms. What qualifies them for this, what makes them worthy of transformation, is something not to be found in *Onos*: moral virtue, goodness displayed, trials overcome. Granted, for Lucius in Apuleius, this comes at the very end, beginning with the prayer he makes in his desperation after his escape from the amphitheater at the beginning of Book 11. But it is a point made in M. David Litwa's fascinating book *Post-human Transformation in Ancient Mediterranean Thought: Becoming Angels and Demons*, written in response to contemporary transhumanist and posthumanist movements. When philosophers and prophets in the ancient world talk about ascent, about transcendence of human nature, elevation is always based on morality.

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16. Ziolkowski describes the story, whose hero is born as an ass but eventually sheds that skin to marry the king's daughter and take his place as husband and ultimately as successor, as a lesson for a schoolboy audience on how to grow from a purely physical nature to a mature position within society.

17. See my essay "Afterthoughts" in Relihan 2009, esp. 70–72.

Speaking of Lucius at the end of *The Golden Ass*, Marina Warner writes, "The serene, exalted, and mystical conclusion implies that he has been proved until he has come into his true self—which is the ultimate goal of such a concept of metamorphosis. The stories Apuleius has told have worked toward Lucius's recognition: both to others of what his true worth is, and to himself, of his true vocation" (88–89). That true self is Isiac and immortal; in *Onos*, Lucius's true self is merely earthly. In *Onos*, there is no sense of Lucius rising above anything. He is merely returned to his original state; he is a man who refuses to learn. Shape lost, shape regained: net displacement, zero. His experience as a Roman citizen, crossing the paths of soldiers, thieves, and magistrates, and his observations of the seamy underbelly of life in the provinces—together they offer only this commentary on the Roman world: it is the sort of world in which this unregenerate Lucius belongs.

We do not have to think that *Onos* is a good book because it thumbs its nose at pretension. *Onos* is often clumsy, and lets the seams show when *Metamorphoseis* has been truncated. It is frankly too long for the splat of a conclusion that it builds up to; we can say that *Onos*, for all its desire for simplification, has stretched the individual Milesian tale to unacceptable limits. We could wish that it took greater liberties with the source text, more than hastily cutting scenes and substituting the farcical ending.<sup>18</sup> But think of *Onos* as two authors fighting for control of the same text, and it is clear that it does some things very well: its pace is relentless, and as we can never take our eyes off of Lucius, he is seen clearly to be constantly under threat of death. But there is another, more profound way in which *Onos*

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18. Tilg, 11: "It would be easy to imagine a satirically minded writer who adapts a recent and successful religious story by cutting its devout last book and bringing the story to a quick comic ending instead." Tilg then raises the possibility that *Onos* could really be Lucian's creatively ironic production. I would say that the process of its composition hardly requires us to imagine a genius behind it.

and *The Golden Ass* illuminate each other and the original *Metamorphoseis*. What we have in *Onos*, once the dust settles, is a work comparable (if not equivalent) not only in length to *Cupid and Psyche* but also in inspiration, and that is perhaps where readers should direct their attentions most specifically when considering the interrelations of these three texts. *Cupid and Psyche*, that dark pearl within *Metamorphoses* for which there is no parallel in substance in *Onos* or (we presume) in *Metamorphoseis*, is one story produced by the irritant that is *Metamorphoseis*; *Onos* is another. What these two works see in *Metamorphoseis*, both in its pretensions and in its potentials, may be the most profitable way to contemplate what that lost Greek original, what Tilg calls “one of the most successful pieces of ancient prose fictions,” was really about.<sup>19</sup>

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19. Tilg, 19.

# How Much Is the Ass Worth?

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Lucius the young man got himself into his predicament by an ill-conceived investigation into human nature (*Onos* 13): Would he retain his humanity if he were transformed into a high-flying bird, free to soar?<sup>1</sup> He is forced, however, to collect data on this question while in the form of a very different animal, a serviceable and marketable ass, all while seeking roses and a way out. This change of host bodies is more than a humiliation. As a bird, he would have been free, an aerial observer; as an ass, he is bound to the earth, a slave constantly subject to others who claim him, use him, pay for him, beat him, feed him, seduce him, display him. In fact, by Section 27, he wishes he were a dog. He becomes much less an observer than a thing observed.

Lucius in *The Golden Ass* (*GA*), by contrast, by virtue of all of the other stories that are related in the text and all of the wicked behavior to which he is exposed, spends much more time as a critic of his surroundings than Lucius in *Onos*. In general, we can say that the narrowing of the focus in *Onos* changes the nature of the story; one particular mechanism is making the ass unceasingly subject to the evaluations of others, who seek to make a profit from his services: Is he worth feeding as a pack animal? How old is he? What can he eat? How well does he dine and dance? How can we exploit him? Can he really have sex with a woman? How can we put him on display?

Some of these evaluations are monetary, and our two texts, *Onos* and *Golden Ass*, handle buying and selling differently, and it is worthwhile spelling out the terms. In the

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1. Whitmarsh (136) makes much of this. In contrast to Apuleius's narrator, "the Greek Lucius is engaged in an empirical (πειρά) experiment in the nature of identity."

second century, it is claimed that the going rate for an ass is twenty-five Attic drachmas (Hijmans, 270). Our Greek text, however, complicates this simple scheme with the first sale, when Philebus purchases the ass for religious and sexual purposes for thirty drachmas, “a very substantial price” (*Onos* 35). The drachmas in question must then be more valuable than the standard Attic drachmas, and J. P. Sullivan suggests that Aeginetan drachmas are at issue, more valuable than Attic drachmas by a ratio of five to three: in other words, the equivalent of fifty Attic drachmas, double the normal price. Perhaps the high price had been better explained in *Metamorphoseis*; this is only the first instance of a general lack of interest in details of price and value in *Onos*.

In *GA*, the price is quite different. An Attic drachma is the equivalent of a Roman denarius, and a denarius is worth four sesterces. But here Philebus buys the ass for seventeen denarii (*GA* 8.25.6), clearly a bargain, and not a high price at all. When the ass is next sold to the baker, no price is given at *Onos* 42, but in *GA* there is a modest price increase that suggests haggling: the baker pays “seven sesterces more than the seventeen denarii that Philebus had paid for me before” (*GA* 9.10.5). When the baker sells the ass to the truck farmer, *Onos* 43 is again silent on the price, but *GA* 9.31.3 gives fifty sesterces: “a high price, as he kept on saying.” As this is about twelve and a half denarii, this only means a high price for the farmer, not a high price absolutely (Hijmans, 270); not only has Lucius’s price gone way down, but we hear more about the buyers who are consulting their poor circumstances and trying to get a bargain.

Next, the soldier in both stories confiscates the farmer’s ass and sells it. *Onos* 46 now gives us a price, and it turns out to be the going rate of twenty-five (Attic) drachmas. Again, *GA* has a low price. *GA* 10.13.2 makes the explicit point that the soldier paid nothing (“He bought me when no one was selling and made me his own at no expense”), and the low price that the soldier gets from the brother cooks, eleven denarii, can be justified as being pure profit

(Zimmerman 2000, 200), though the brothers are certainly being clever in obtaining that price. They have a view to their own profit even then, perhaps, because they will sell the ass, once his human skills are known, at a considerably higher price to their master. At *Onos* 48, Meneclēs pays twice what the brothers paid—that is, fifty Attic drachmas—and the ass is thus returned to the worth he had when Philebus bought him. In *GA* 10.17.1, with characteristic Apuleian exaggeration, the master Thiasus (not yet named at that point in the story) pays *four* times what the cooks paid. But see where we end up: by very different routes, Lucius ends up in both stories at a value well above the going rate, fifty drachmas in *Onos*, forty-four denarii in *GA*. He is most valued when he is not a beast of burden, but a parody of a man. Of course, this leaves out the financial transaction by which the matron rents the ass's services on a per night basis: neither text is indiscreet enough to name that high price (*Onos* 50: "a massive amount of money"; *GA* 10.19.4: "one bountiful bribe").

It seems that there is some function to these sales and prices, some index by which to gauge the ass's progress. The beginning of this sequence of sales marks the beginning of the second half of *Onos* when, after the death of the maiden and the collapse of her family, Lucius is taken along with the fleeing household slaves to another town. Implicit in the first sale to Philebus in *Onos* is that the ass is more valuable when on display (carrying the Syrian goddess) and when viewed as a sexual creature than when he is a beast of burden; he starts and ends at the same price, serving the same functions. *The Golden Ass*, however, is not so schematic, and the ass's price starts low and fluctuates, but balloons in anticipation of his display in the amphitheater in Corinth. In sum, the Greek *Metamorphoseis*, I feel, had more to say about prices and the people who paid them than is reflected in *Onos*. *Onos*, which has greater interest in the vocabulary of master and slave than *GA* does (Paschalis 2019), has a correspondingly lesser interest in the financial medium and process of exchange.

# About the Greek Text

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The text that is translated here is the one edited by Helmut van Thiel (1972); some departures are discussed in the notes. As the texts edited twice by M. D. Macleod are much more accessible (Loeb 1967; Oxford 1974), I have listed here the most important differences between van Thiel and Macleod, omitting some (but not all) minor matters of punctuation and orthography. I do not attempt to record the history of individual emendations, only the contents of the texts themselves. The text of *Onos* is typically printed only with section numbers; van Thiel, however, introduces sentence numbers as well, and those sentence numbers are used below.

When used without qualification, *Macleod* indicates that his two texts are in agreement.

The Greek text used in the edition of Evan Hayes and Stephen Nimis (Faenum Publishing 2012) is that of C. Jacobitz (1907), freely available online. The text that is included in the online *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* is that of Macleod's Loeb.

- 1.2 ἐκοινωνοῦμεν. καὶ οὕτως van Thiel; ἐκοινωνοῦμεν, καὶ οὕτως Macleod
- 1.5 “μίαν θεράπαιναν τρέφει . . . φιλαργυρώτατος δεινῶς”  
quotation marks van Thiel
- 1.6 κῆπός τις ἔνδον ἦν καὶ οἰκίδιον ἀνεκτόν van Thiel; κῆπός τις ἦν καὶ ἔνδον οἰκίδιον ἀνεκτόν Macleod
- 2.6 δὸς τὸν ἕτερον κοιτῶνα van Thiel, Macleod Loeb; δὸς τὸν ἑταῖρον κοιτῶνα Macleod Oxford; cf. GA 1.23.5: *adiacens . . . illud cubiculum*

- 2.6 οὐχὶ μετρίαν ἐλήλυθεν ὁδόν van Thiel, Macleod Oxford;  
οὐχὶ μετρίαν γὰρ ἐλήλυθεν ὁδόν Macleod Loeb
- 3.1 ταῦτα εἰπόντος van Thiel, MacLeod Loeb; ταῦτα εἰπόντα  
Macleod Oxford
- 3.3 δεῖπνου ξένου. καὶ οὕτω van Thiel; δείπνου ξένου, καὶ  
οὕτω Macleod
- 5.2 τὴν Παλαίστραν van Thiel; τὴν θεράπαιναν τὴν  
Παλαίστραν Macleod
- 6.3 παρεδρεύεις, θεραπεῦσαι δέ σε οὐδεὶς ἄλλος οὐδὲ θεὸς  
ἰκανός van Thiel; παρεδρεύεις, θεραπεῦσαι δέ σε οὐδεὶς  
ἄλλ' οὐδὲ θεὸς ἰατρός Macleod
- 6.3 πλέον πονεῖν van Thiel; πλέον ποθεῖν Macleod
- 6.3 μόνη ἐγώ. van Thiel; μόνη ἐγώ, Macleod
- 8.2 εἰς παλαίστραν ἐμπέπτωκας van Thiel; εἰς Παλαίστραν  
ἐμπέπτωκας Macleod
- 9.2 κατὰ πλάτους van Thiel; κατὰ πλάτος Macleod
- 9.2 πλέξον van Thiel (following *P.Oxy.* 466); δῆξον Macleod
- 10.2 ἄλλ' ἀρκέου τὰ ἐπιταπτόμενα παλαίων van Thiel; ἄλλα  
καὶ οὐ ἀρκέου τὰ ἐπιταπτόμενα παλαίων Macleod
- 10.4 καὶ κρούσας ῥῖψον van Thiel (following *P.Oxy.* 466);  
καὶ κρούσας κύψον Macleod Loeb; καὶ κρούσας κύψον  
Macleod Oxford
- 11.6 ἐπιτρέψοι van Thiel; ἐπιτρέψει Macleod
- 12.1 χάριτος; ᾧ νῦν van Thiel; χάριτος, ᾧ νῦν Macleod
- 12.6 καὶ οἶον ἐκεῖνο οἱ κόρακες van Thiel; καὶ οἶον ἐκεῖνοι οἱ  
κόρακες Macleod
- 12.6 ἔξω διὰ van Thiel; διὰ Macleod
- 13.3 ἐπανοίξασα van Thiel; ὑπανοίξασα Macleod
- 14.1 χρίουσαν van Thiel; φύουσαν Macleod

- 15.5 ταῦτα γὰρ ἐνενοῦν van Thiel; ταῦτα δ' ἄρ' ἐνενοῦν  
Macleod
- 16.4 ἔπασχεν van Thiel, Macleod Loeb; ἔπασχον Macleod  
Oxford
- 16.6 ἄλλως ἐβόων van Thiel, Macleod Loeb; ἄλλο ἐβόων  
Macleod Oxford
- 17.4 ὑπὲρ αὐτὸν van Thiel; ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν Macleod
- 18.1 ξύλῳ van Thiel, Macleod Oxford; τῷ ξύλῳ Macleod  
Loeb
- 18.4 λαβόντες· ὀλίγον van Thiel; λαβόντες, καὶ ὀλίγον  
Macleod Loeb; λαβόντες, ὀλίγον Macleod Oxford
- 18.4 δραμεῖν· ὀπίσω van Thiel; δραμεῖν.” ὀπίσω Macleod  
Oxford; δραμεῖν.” ὀπίσω οὖν Macleod Loeb
- 18.5 ἐφῆκαν van Thiel; ἀφῆκαν Macleod
- 19.4 ἐς τοῦναντίον με van Thiel; ἐς τοῦναντίον Macleod
- 20.2 ὡς οὐκ εἶη ἔτι πολὺ τῆς ὁδοῦ καὶ ὅτι καταλύσουσιν λοιπὸν  
ἔνθα καταμένουσιν van Thiel; ὡς οὐκ εἶη ἔτι πολὺ τῆς  
ὁδοῦ λοιπὸν καὶ ὅτι καταμενοῦσιν ἔνθα καταλύσουσιν  
Macleod
- 20.6 πίθοι· van Thiel; πίθοι, Macleod
- 21.5 ἐμαυτὸν τὴν van Thiel; ἐμαυτὸν καὶ τὴν Macleod Loeb;  
ἐμαυτὸν (καὶ) τὴν Macleod Oxford
- 22.4 παρεῖναι van Thiel; παριέναι Macleod
- 23.7 θανάτων ἄλλων van Thiel, Macleod Loeb; θανάτων  
πολλῶν Macleod Oxford
- 23.10 εὔχετο van Thiel; ἠύχετο Macleod
- 24.1 ἐσχίζετο τριπλῆ ὁδός van Thiel; ἐσχίζετο τριπλῆ <ή>  
ὁδός Macleod
- 24.7 κατέδησαν. εἶτα van Thiel; κατέδησαν, εἶτα Macleod
- 25.2 οὐδὲ εἰς ἡμῶν van Thiel; οὐδὲ εἰς ἄν ἡμῶν Macleod

Note: I follow, but do not record, the many differences of punctuation in van Thiel's text of this section (25.2–8).

- 25.8 τῇ δ' ὀδμῇ van Thiel; τῇ τε ὀδμῇ Macleod
- 26.1 ἐπιδεξάμενος van Thiel; ἐπιδεξόμενος καὶ Macleod
- 26.3 προσογκησαμένου van Thiel; προσογκησαμένου Macleod
- 27.2 † τοῖς κεκτημένης † van Thiel; <παρὰ> τῆς κεκτημένης Macleod
- 27.4 θέλων [πατήρ] van Thiel; θέλων ὁ πατήρ Macleod
- 27.7 ταῖς ἵπποις μὲν van Thiel; ταῖς ἵπποις με Macleod
- 27.7 εἰς νομόν, van Thiel; εἰς νομόν. Macleod
- 28.1 κριθὰς ὄλας. van Thiel; κριθὰς ὄλας, Macleod
- 28.4 [τῶν ἵππων] van Thiel
- 29.4 τῶν ξύλων van Thiel; δέον τῶν ξύλων Macleod
- 29.4 προσβαλεῖν van Thiel; προσβάλλειν Macleod
- 30.2 οὐ γὰρ ἦν καταβάντος χειρά μοι ἐπιδούναι κάμῃ χαμόθεν ἐπεγείρειν καὶ τὸ φορτίον ἀφελεῖν ἄν ποτε, οὔτε χειρά ἐπέδωκεν van Thiel; † οὐ γὰρ ἦν καταβάς τοῦ τὴν χειρά ἐπιδούναι κάμῃ χαμόθεν ἐπεγείρειν καὶ τὸ φορτίον ἀφελεῖν [ἄν ποτε οὔτε χειρά ἐπέδωκεν] † Macleod Oxford; † οὐ γὰρ ἦν καιρὸς τοῦ τὴν χειρά μοι ἐπιδούναι κάμῃ χαμόθεν ἐπεγείρειν καὶ τοῦ φορτίου ἀφελεῖν, οὔποτε οὐδὲ χειρά ἐπέδωκεν Macleod Loeb
- 31.6 ἐλπίζων ὑπεξῆλθον, van Thiel; ἐλπίζων ὑπεξῆλθον. Macleod
- 32.1 τὸν αὐτὸν δεσπότην van Thiel; τὸν αὐτοῦ δεσπότην Macleod
- 32.3 ἐπὰν γυναιῖκα ἢ παρθένον van Thiel; ἐπὰν γυναιῖκα παρθένον Macleod
- 32.3 πλησιάζειν βιάζεται. van Thiel; πλησιάζειν βιάζεται, Macleod

- 33.1 καὶ τὰ κρέα van Thiel; τὰ δὲ κρέα Macleod
- 34.1 ἐπεὶ δὲ <ἦν> van Thiel; ἐπεὶ δὲ Macleod
- 34.3 κεκενωμένης οἰκίας van Thiel; κεκενωμένης <τῆς> οἰκίας Macleod
- 37.4 καὶ οἶνον καὶ τυροῦ κάδον van Thiel; καὶ οἶνου κάδον καὶ τυροὺς Macleod
- 38.2 Καὶ μέχρι νῦν ἀνέχομαι κακῶν interpreted as direct speech by van Thiel and Macleod; I take these words as the narrator's comment.
- 39.3 τῶν φίλων τις van Thiel, Macleod Oxford; τῶν φίλων <γάρ> τις Macleod Loeb
- 39.6 ῥαθυμία ταύτη van Thiel; ἀθυμία τοιαύτη Macleod
- 39.7 σκευάσας van Thiel, Macleod Oxford; κατασκευάσας Macleod Loeb
- 41.1 ἐπεὶ ἤδη van Thiel; ἐπεὶ δὲ ἤδη Macleod
- 41.5 κλέψαντες [ὑπὸ τῇ θεῷ ἔφερον] van Thiel; κλέψαντες, <ἦν> ὑπὸ τῇ θεῷ ἔφερον Macleod
- 41.6 καὶ καταπηδήσαντες van Thiel; καταπηδήσαντες Macleod
- 43.2 ὁ δεσπότης ἔωθεν van Thiel; ὁ δὲ δεσπότης ἔωθεν Macleod
- 43.4 πάνυ σκληρὸν van Thiel; πάγον σκληρὸν Macleod Loeb; <πάγον> πάνυ Macleod Oxford
- 44.8 τὴν δὲ μάχαιραν βαστάσας [ἐμοὶ] ἤλαυνεν ἐς πόλιν van Thiel; τὴν δὲ μάχαιραν βαστάσας ἐπ' ἐμοὶ ἤλαυνεν ἐς τὴν πόλιν Macleod
- 45.3 τότε μόλις ἐπαναστάς van Thiel; ποτε μόλις ἐπαναστάς Macleod Oxford; ποτε μόλις ἐξαναστάς Macleod Loeb
- 46.10 ἄμφω καὶ van Thiel, Macleod Loeb; ἄμφω κὰν Macleod Oxford
- 47.4 † τισιν van Thiel; τί ἐστίν Macleod

- 47.6 ἤχ(θέσ)θην van Thiel; ἤχθόμην Macleod
- 47.7 γάρῳ καὶ ἐλαίῳ van Thiel; <έν> γάρῳ καὶ ἐλαίῳ Macleod
- 48.4 ἀνανεύων ἐν καιρῷ καὶ κατανεύων van Thiel; ἀνένευον ἐν καιρῷ καὶ κατένευον Macleod
- 49.2 ἀνδρῶν ὅπλοις πρὸς ἀλλήλους μονομαχεῖν εἰδότην van Thiel, Macleod; van Thiel in his apparatus suspects that a grammarian's gloss lies behind this phrase; I bracket it.
- 49.3 ἐξελαύνομεν ἕωθεν van Thiel, Macleod Oxford; ἐξελαύνομεν οὖν ἕωθεν Macleod Loeb
- 50.1 τοῖς βουλομένοις van Thiel; καὶ τοῖς βουλομένοις Macleod
- 50.1 [τὴν θύραν ἤνοιγεν] van Thiel
- 50.2 ὄνου γαστρί van Thiel; ὄνου γαστρὶ δοκοῦν Macleod, who would prefer, but does not print, δοκοῦν ὄνου γαστρὶ; van Thiel relates this to what he calls the "interpretive interpolations" of Codex N (vol. II, preface, p. xxi, note 25).
- 50.5 ἀναπαύσασθαι van Thiel; ἀναπαύσεσθαι Macleod
- 51.3 ποι πλησίον van Thiel; που πλησίον Macleod
- 51.5 καὶ ἐφίλησεν van Thiel; καὶ ἐφίλησε Macleod Loeb; κατεφίλησε Macleod Oxford
- 51.6 οὐδὲν τρίτου van Thiel; οὐδὲν τι του Macleod
- 51.6 τῷ χρωτὶ [τοῦ μύρου] van Thiel; τῷ χρίσματι τοῦ μύρου Macleod
- 51.7 τοῖς ὄνοις συνήθους van Thiel; τῆς ὄνοις συνήθους Macleod
- 51.7 [οὐδὲ γυναικὶ ἐχρησάμην ὄνῳ] van Thiel
- 51.9 παρανακειμένη van Thiel; παρακειμένη Macleod
- 52.2 γενόμενος van Thiel; γενησόμενος *scripsi* Macleod Loeb; γενησόμενος ? Macleod Oxford

- 54.1 ἐν τούτῳ δὲ ἐν τοῖς van Thiel, Macleod Oxford; ἐν τούτῳ  
δέ τινος ἄνθη φέροντος παροδεύοντος ἐν τοῖς Macleod  
Loeb
- 55.2 ἔστιν μοι Λούκιος van Thiel (no lacuna); . . . ἔστι μοι  
Λούκιος Macleod Loeb; . . . ἔστιν μοι Λούκιος Macleod  
Oxford
- 56.5 δῆθεν van Thiel; ὡς δῆθεν Macleod
- 56.7 τοιοῦτο van Thiel; τοσοῦτο Macleod
- 56.9 γυμνὸς καλὸς καλῶς van Thiel, Macleod Oxford; γυμνὸς  
καλῶς Macleod Loeb

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This very limited selection of texts, translations, and studies assembles works that I have found particularly useful while composing my translation. It makes no pretense of completeness.

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# The Tale of Lucius

## *or, The Ass*

### INTRODUCTIONS IN HYPATA

1. Once upon a time I was on the road from home to Thessaly. I had some financial dealings there—my father's business with a man who lived there—and a horse was carrying me down there, my baggage too, and a slave was following along, just one. And so I was traveling along the road that lay before me, and somehow it happened that others were on the road too, heading to Hypata, the city in Thessaly—they were from there—and we were sharing salt.

And after we completed that hard road in this fashion we were already near the city, and I asked these Thessalians if they knew a man who lived round about Hypata, Hipparchus by name. (I was bringing him a letter from home, so that I could lodge with him.) And they told me that they knew this Hipparchus, and where in the city he lived, and that he had a lot of money, and "He supports a single serving girl, and his wife, just the two them, for he is a terrible money grubber."

And when we had gotten near the city there was a garden within it, and a tolerable little cottage where Hipparchus lived. 2. And so, after they hugged me goodbye, they went on their way, and I went up to the door. I knock, and then a woman, slowly and grudgingly, but she did hear, and then she presented herself. I asked her if Hipparchus was inside.

"Yes, he's inside," she said, "but who are you and what do you want by asking?"

"I've come bringing him a letter from Decrianus, the sophist from Patras."

"Wait for me," she said, "right here."

Then she shut the door and went back inside again. And sometime later she came out and bade us enter. I went on in and presented myself; I embrace the man affectionately; then I handed over the letter. Now he happened to be at the beginning of his dinner and was stretched out upon a narrow couch; his wife was seated nearby, and a table with nothing on it was set before them. Then, after he went over the letter, he said, "He is my dearest friend! And Decrianus, that most outstanding of all the Greeks, does me a favor, he does, and sends his friends my way in confidence. You see this humble house of mine, Lucius, how small it is, yet well suited to accommodate its inhabitant. But, if you'll be so accommodating, you shall make it a great house once you have been housed within it."

And he calls his serving girl: "Palaestra, give him the other bedroom and take whatever baggage he has and secure it. Then send him to the baths, for it's no short road that he has traveled."

3. After he said that, Palaestra, that cute little serving girl, leads me and shows me the nicest little bedchamber. "Now you," she said, "will sleep upon this bed *here*, and I'll put a pallet down beside it *here* for your slave, and I'll put a pillow on top." After she said that we went away to bathe, but only after we gave her money for barley for my horse. And she took all my things and carried them inside and she put them away.

And after we had bathed, we turned right around and went back inside straightaway, and Hipparchus received me and ordered me to recline at table alongside him. Now the dinner was nice, not too frugal, but the wine—that was sweet and old. And after we had dined there was drinking, and the usual sort of conversation for dinner with a guest. And in this way we gave that evening over to drinking and then went to bed.

The next day Hipparchus asked me where my travels would take me now and whether I would be spending all

my days there with him. "I'm off to Larissa," I said, "and it's likely I'll spend some time there—three or five days."

4. Of course, this was pretext. I was actually very, very eager to stay there and track down one of those women who understand the art of magic and to see something mind-boggling: a flying man, say, or a man being turned into stone. And because I had given myself over to my desire for just this very sight, I was walking around the city, without a clue where to start my search, but I was walking around all the same.

And while I was doing this, I see a woman coming toward me, still young, and well-off, so far as I could guess from the street. Her clothes were embroidered with flowers, you see; her slaves were plentiful, her gold jewelry abundant. But when I got closer, the woman calls me by name, and I answer her in kind, and she says, "I am Abroea, a friend of your mother's—you must have heard—and I love all of you who are her offspring just like those I bore myself. And so, my boy, you'll lodge with me—why not?"

"Well, thank you very much," I said, "but I would hate to turn my back on the house and hospitality of a friend when I have no complaint against him. But you are most kind and, in spirit, I am staying in your home."

"Well then," she said, "where *are* you staying?"

"At Hipparchus's."

"The miser?" she said.

"Dear mother," I said, "you oughtn't talk like that at all. He's proved himself magnificent to me, you see, and so lavish that one could even accuse him of wanton luxury."

She breaks into a smile and takes me by the hand. She leads me off to one side and she says to me, "You listen to me! You keep Hipparchus's wife at arm's length, by all means necessary. She is a witch, you see—powerful, dreadful, and lecherous—and she casts her eye on all the young men. And if someone doesn't do what she wants, it's by her art that she takes her revenge on him: many of them she turned into animals, and others she killed outright. And you—you are young, my boy, and pretty enough to arouse a woman in an instant; also, you are a

stranger in town, and no one watches out for you in a situation like that."

5. Me? When I found out that what I had long been looking for lay waiting at home where I was, I stopped paying attention to *her* altogether. And when I eventually got free of her I was off on my way home, muttering to myself on the road. "Come on now! You who said that you longed for just this mind-boggling sight, get yourself up now—do yourself a favor—and find some clever stratagem, one by which you can get the things you desire, and strip already for that Palaestra! Of course, keep a long distance from the wife of your host and friend. But if you try a fall with Palaestra, and train naked with her, and grapple with her, rest assured just how easily you'll be in the know. After all, slaves understand all the goings-on, both the proper and the scandalous."

And so I was going on home, saying these things to myself. Now I didn't catch Hipparchus himself at home, nor his wife either, but Palaestra was busy at the hearth, preparing dinner for us. 6. And straightaway I took it from there. I said, "O my beautiful Palaestra, how rhythmically you move your buttocks in time with your pot and bend over! My groin is moved in fluid response! Blessed is whatever man has dipped himself in that!"

And she—well, you know she was sassy and then some, that little number, brimming over with temptations—she said, "If you've got your wits about you and you value your life, boy, you'd run away! That pot brims over with so much heat, so much sweet savor. Because should you even touch it, burned with that fiery brand you'd be bound to my service, and no one, not even a god, would be enough to heal you, but only I, the one who burned you. And what's the most mind-boggling thing? I will make you suffer even more, and as you drink in the pain that comes from my cure you'll put up with it, always, and you'll never run away from this sweet pain of mine, not even if they were stoning you to death.

“What are you laughing at? You see before you a butcher of man flesh, pure and simple. You see, it’s not only these trivial little tasties that I prepare, but even now this big thing here, this beautiful thing, this man thing—this is what I know how to slaughter and skin and cut up fine but, what I love most of all, I get my hands on the guts and the heart.”

“You got that right,” I said. “I mean, when I was some long way off, not even close, you tortured me, not with baking and roasting—god, no!—but with some firestorm. You pitched your fire, your invisible fire, through these eyes of mine and down into my guts, and you have me on the grill though I’d done you no wrong. So—gods above!—come heal me with those cures you speak of, bitter ones, sweet ones, you’ve already slaughtered me, pick me up and skin me, any way you want!”

That made her burst out laughing—very loud and very lovely—and she was mine from then on. Our agreement was this: after she had settled the master and mistress for the night she would come to me in my room and join me in my bed.

## WRESTLING WITH PALAESTRA

7. Hipparchus arrived, eventually. Then we bathed, and enjoyed our dinner; the drinking was plentiful, and we enjoyed each other’s company. Then I made up a story about needing my sleep; I stood up and was, in fact, off to where I was staying. Everything within had been well prepared: a pallet had been laid down for my slave boy outside, and a table was set up next to the bed, complete with a drinking cup. Wine was put out there next to it, with water at the ready, both hot and cold, and all of this was Palaestra’s preparation. Roses in abundance had been spread out over the covers: some of them naked, *au naturel*; some teased

apart into petals; some woven together into crowns. And as I found my symposium ready, I was waiting for my fellow symposiast.

8. After she had gotten her mistress to bed, she promptly and eagerly shot off to my room, and there was quite the party, the two of us drinking each other's health—toasts of wine and kisses. And then, when we had, courtesy of the wine, gotten ourselves good and ready for the night, Palaestra says to me, "This is what you absolutely have to keep in mind, boy, that you have stumbled onto a real wrestling floor, and now you must give me a demonstration, whether you were a formidable foe when you were with the boys, whether you ever learned a lot of moves and grips and snatches."

"No, you won't see me running away from a test like *that!* So take your clothes off, and let's wrestle already."

"Make your demonstration this way," she said, "the way I want it. In the manner of a trainer and coach I will call out the names of the grips and snatches I want, when I've determined them, and you—get yourself ready to obey and to do everything that you're commanded."

"Just give the order," I said, "and just watch how fearlessly, how fluidly, how forcefully I'll make my grips and snatches."

9. And she took off her clothes and stood there, completely naked. Then she began to give orders. "Now, my boy, off with your clothes! Rub yourself down from the ointment jar, then come to grips with your opponent. Pull the two thighs apart, lay me out, flat on my back, then, on top, lower yourself between the thighs and spread the legs apart—lift 'em high and stretch 'em skyward. Then back off, take your position, and stick to it like glue. Penetrate, hit it hard; push, stab at it from every angle, until you're exhausted. Let your hips do the work! Now withdraw, keep it level, mid-groin, wrap your legs around, and again, push all the way to the wall, and strike, strike! And if you ever see a gap in the line, get on top already, get a clinch hold round the waist, and keep at it. And try not to

hurry—tough it out a little! Match move for move! *There!* Lesson's over."

10. And after I had obeyed her smoothly in every respect, and all our grips and snatches had finally relaxed, I said to Palaestra with a burst of laughter, "You see, teacher, how all the wrestling's been done—how easily, how obediently—by *me*, but *you* watch out now: don't submit your calls for grips and snatches out of order. Now it's one thing you call for, now it's another, one after the other."

She slapped my face. "I've got me a babbling idiot," she said, "for a student! No, *you* watch out you don't get slapped again and worse if you won't wrestle with the moves you've been assigned."

That's what she said. She got up, and after she freshened up she said, "Now you'll give a demonstration that you're a young and vigorous wrestler, and that you know how to wrestle and perform from the kneeling position."

She dropped onto the bed on one knee.

"Come on now, you wrestler you, you've got your opponent by the middle, so deploy your weapon, push it in and drive it deep. You see 'im lying there, naked and defenseless, so use what you've got. First things first. By the book: squeeze tight in the clinch, then bend 'im back and push on in and keep on at it—no let up, no gap. And if your opponent starts to flag, then quick! Raise 'im up higher, change your position, and after you hit, throw 'im down, and make sure that you don't withdraw quicker than you've been ordered to. No—bend yourself double, then withdraw it and then, inserting it below again and using the leghold, keep at it and keep moving, and then release 'im, for 'e's flat on the mat, your opponent is, and unstrung, and just a pool of sweat."

And then, laughing long and loud, "My turn!" I said. "Teacher, I want to give the orders for a few grips and snatches, so you listen to me. Get up. Sit down. Pour water over my hands, rub the rest of me, and towel me off. And, for the love of Heracles, put your arms around me and put me to bed."

11. In pleasures like these, in sport like this, in grips and snatches, each trying to outdo the other, we crowned ourselves victors in these nighttime contests. Great was our abandon and our excess in all this—so much so that I completely forgot all about my trip to Larissa.

## A MISTAKEN METAMORPHOSIS

11.2 And at some point it came into my mind to learn the things that I had come for, and I say to her, “Sweetheart, show me your mistress, when she’s working her magic or changing her shape. You know, long time now I have desired just this mind-boggling sight. Better yet—if you know anything about it, work some magic yourself, so that you can reveal yourself to me in one appearance after another after another. In fact, I think that you are hardly ignorant of this very art, and I know this not because I have learned it from some other source but because I understood it from my own soul. Long time now, I’ve been Mr. Straightarrow, as the women used to call me, and I never trained these eyes of mine on any woman in any erotic way, but you—you’ve got me in the grip of that art of yours and you keep me captive, ensorceling my soul through erotic combat.”

And Palaestra says, “Stop it! No joking. What spell can charm Love by magic? Love is himself the master of the art. And I, sweetheart—I know nothing of these things. I swear it by your head here and by this bed of joy. You see, I don’t even know how to read, and my mistress happens to be very stingy when it comes to this art of hers. But, should the opportunity present itself, I will try to make it possible for you to see the woman who *does* possess the knowledge as she changes her shape.”

And at that point, on those terms and conditions, we went to bed.

12. Not many days later Palaestra brought me the news that her mistress was about to become a bird and fly off to her lover.

"Now," I said, "is the time for the favor you promised me. Ah, yes! Now it's in your power to grant your suppliant release from his long-standing desire!"

"Courage!" she said.

When it was evening she takes me by the hand and leads me to the door of the chamber where they were sleeping and she orders me to apply myself to a narrow little chink in the door and to check out what was happening within. And so I see the woman as she is taking off her clothes. Then, naked, she drew near to the lamp; she took two pieces of incense; one (it was frankincense) she put in the flame of the lamp; then she stood there and muttered many words over the lamp. Then she opened up a massive chest, one that had within it a great number of little jars, and she lifts out and brings up a single one. The contents that the jar held? I have no idea, but as far as its appearance went, it gave the impression of olive oil. She takes some of this and then smears herself all over, starting from her toenails, and feathers grow out of her instantly. Her nose became keratinous and hook-shaped, and the various other properties and characteristics of birds, she had them all. She was a long-eared owl, *that and nothing else!* And when she saw herself feathered over, she let out a dreadful screech, like the sound those owls make; she rose up and she was off, flying out through the window.

13. Now I thought that I was seeing a dream. I kept touching my eyelids with my fingers as I didn't believe my eyes—*Were they watching? Were they even awake?* After I came to believe, slowly and hesitantly, that I was not asleep, then I kept begging Palaestra to put feathers on me too, to smear me with that same drug and let me fly. You see, I wanted to learn by experience whether, after I had changed from my human shape, I would be a bird in soul as well.

After she opens the chamber she brings out the jar. There is no stopping me. I'd already taken off my clothes and I'm smearing myself all over, and I don't become a bird, fool that I am, but a tail came out of me from the rear, and all my fingers disappeared I don't know where. Four

nails were all the nails I had, and these were nothing else but hooves, and my hands and feet became the feet of a beast of burden, and my ears grew long and my face grew big. I looked all around me in a circle and I saw I was myself an ass, and a human voice for blaming Palaestra—that I didn't have any longer. But I stuck out my lower lip, and in this attitude, like an ass, looking up at her, I tried to lay my charge against her, as best I could, being now an ass instead of a bird.

14. And she slapped her face with both her hands.

"Fool that I am!" she said. "I have made a *big* mistake. You see, in my hurry, I was fooled by the uniformity of the jars, and I took a different one, not the one that makes the feathers sprout. But courage, sweetheart mine! The cure for this is a simpler thing. You see, if you only eat roses, you will immediately shed the beast and you will give my lover back to me again, my own. But, sweetheart, please, for me, endure this one single night inside the ass, and at dawn I'll run and bring you roses and you will eat them and be healed."

That's what she said, with a stroking of my ears and the rest of my hide.

15. Now I was in all other respects an ass, but in my mind and my intelligence I was a human being, that old Lucius, except for my voice. Consequently, inside myself I blamed Palaestra over and over for her mistake, but I bit my lip and went off to where I knew my own horse was stabled, along with another genuine ass, one of Hipparchus's. But they, when they realized that I was coming inside, because they were afraid that I was coming in to join them as a sharer of their fodder, they laid their ears back and were ready to fight for their bellies by means of their hooves. And when I understood this, I retreated some distance from their manger and stood still, and tried to laugh, though my laughter was braying. Why? Because I was thinking to myself, "This sticking my nose in! It couldn't have happened at a worse time! What if a wolf comes in to join us, or some other beast? I'm in trouble, and I haven't done anything wrong!"

Those were my thoughts, while I had no idea, fool that I was, of the evil that was in the offing.

## IN THE SERVICE OF BANDITS

16. You see, when it was the depths of night, when silence and sweet sleep prevailed, the wall from the outside makes a knocking noise, as if being dug through, and in fact it *was* being dug through, and already there appeared a crack capable of admitting a man, and immediately a man was coming through it, and another one just the same, and many were inside, and they all had swords. And then, after they trussed up Hipparchus and Palaestra and my slave boy inside in their chambers, without any further trepidation they were emptying out the house, taking the money and the clothing and household goods outside. And when nothing else was left inside, they took the other ass too and the horse and they saddled us up; then they piled and tied onto us all of the things that they had hauled out. And so we were carrying a great burden, and they were beating us with cudgels, trying to drive us along, in their attempt to escape toward the mountain along some trackless path.

Now as for the other beasts, I can't say what they were feeling, but as for me, going off unshod and unaccustomed, tripping over the sharp rocks, I'd just about had it, carrying all that baggage. And time and again I was tripping and stumbling, and there was no opportunity granted me to fall, and instantly one or another would keep beating me along my flanks from behind with his cudgel. And time and again I longed to cry out, "O Caesar," but then I did nothing but bray—the "O" I kept calling out loud and most articulate, but the "Caesar" would not come. But as a matter of fact, it was because of this very thing that I kept on being beaten—I was giving them away by my braying. And so, after I learned that I was calling out to no effect, I decided it was best to go forward in silence and take not being beaten as pure profit.

17. And that's the way it was. And now it was day already, and we had climbed up over many mountains, and our mouths were held tight by our muzzles, so we wouldn't waste the bandits' time by grazing for breakfast along the road. And so for the time being I remained an ass indeed. But when it was the very middle of the day, we stopped to rest at some farmhouse belonging to some men who were known to them, so far as I could observe from what went on. They threw their arms around each other, you see, and kissed each other, and the men at the farmhouse kept urging the others to stop and rest, and they set out breakfast, and for us, the animals, they threw down some barley.

Now the others were eating their breakfast, but I—I was starving, dreadfully. But since I had never eaten raw barley before, I was looking around for something I might actually eat. I see a garden there, behind the dooryard, and it had lots of vegetables, lovely ones too, and roses were visible along the top of it. None of those who are busy inside with their breakfasts notice me as I walk to the garden: for one thing, to stuff myself full of raw vegetables; for another, because of the roses. You see, I reckoned that if I ate those flowers I really would become a man again. Then, after I walked into the garden I stuffed myself full of lettuces and radishes and parsley, such things as a man eats raw, but *those* roses were not *real* roses, but rather the roses that grow on the wild laurel—laurel-roses people call them, and an evil breakfast for an ass that is, any ass and any horse, for they say that anyone who has eaten them dies on the spot.

18. At this juncture the gardener caught on. He picked up a cudgel, went into the garden, and beheld his opponent and the destruction of his vegetables. Then, like some petty tyrant, Mr. Death to All Evildoers, when he's caught a thief in the act, he walloped me with the cudgel like this, sparing neither my flanks nor my haunches, and more than that: he tore my ears and he smashed in my face. I wasn't putting up with this any longer. I kicked out with

my two hind legs and laid him flat on his back on his vegetables; then I tried to escape up into the mountain.

But when he saw me escaping at a run, he called out to have the dogs sicced on me. Now these dogs were many and huge and a match for bears in battle. I realized that they would tear me apart if they caught me. I soon doubled back and determined to follow the proverb, "Better to run back home than to run into trouble." I was escaping, but backward, and I went again to the farmhouse. The dogs were barreling along at a run, but the men called them to heel and tied them up, but me—beating me all the while, they didn't let me go until, smarting from the pain, I spewed forth all those vegetables from my hindquarters.

19. And yet, when it was time to journey onward, it was me that they put the heaviest and the greatest portion of their ill-gotten gains on, and this was the way that we marched on then from there. But when I just couldn't go on any more, being beaten, being burdened by the bags and bales, my hooves worn down to the quick from the road, I decided that I would collapse right then and there and not ever get up again, not even if they were to butcher me with their blows, because I thought that I would have this great benefit accruing from my scheme: you see, I thought that they would be completely outmaneuvered and would divvy up my baggage onto the horse and the ass; me they would just let lie there for the wolves. But some demon gave me the evil eye, divined my plans, and turned me right back around. How so? The other ass entertained the same ideas as I did and fell on the road. The men at first kept ordering the wretched thing to stand up, each beating it with his cudgel, but when it responded not at all to their blows, they grabbed it, some by the ears, some by the tail, and kept on trying to get it on its feet. But as they were getting nowhere, and it lay there like a stone in the road, just not going on anymore, they reckoned among themselves that they were laboring in vain and that they were wasting the time needed for escape by ministering to a dead ass. So they divvy up all the baggage that it was carrying onto me

and the horse, and take a sword to that wretched beast, the companion of my captivity, the co-bearer of my burdens. They cut its legs out from under it, and they push it, still gasping, over the cliff's edge, and so it disappeared down below, dancing the dance of death.

20. And I saw, courtesy of my fellow traveler, the consummation of the plans that I had had, so I determined to endure with nobility what was at my feet and to travel on with enthusiasm, as I had hopes in any event that I would at some point stumble upon those roses, and I would be saved and restored to myself through their agency. Further, I kept hearing from the robbers that there wasn't much of our trek remaining, and that they would therefore be stopping at the place where they were staying. The result? We were carrying all that stuff at a run, and before evening we came to their homestead.

An old woman was sitting inside, and a generous fire was burning. They put inside all of the things that we happened to be carrying, and then they asked the old woman, "Why are you sitting down like this? Why aren't you getting lunch ready?"

"Wait!" said the old woman. "Everything is at your disposal: many loaves of bread, barrels of old wine. I've prepared wild game for you and I have it ready."

They heaped praise on the old woman, then stripped themselves naked and oiled themselves up in front of the fire. There was a basin with hot water in it, and they drew off some from that and by pouring it over themselves they made themselves an improvised bath.

21. And then, just a little while later, a large number of young men arrived, bringing baggage with them in heaps: gold things and silver, fancy clothes and men's and women's jewelry—lots of it. These men were partners with the others, and when these things had been deposited inside, they bathed just as the others had. And so, right afterward, there was a lavish lunch and much storytelling in this symposium of manslayers.

The old woman put out some barley for me and the horse, and he gulped down that barley with alacrity, being

apprehensive of me, his lunch partner. This was reasonable. But whenever I saw the old woman going out I would eat the bread of the men who were inside. But on the next day they left a young man behind with the old woman and the rest of them went out to their work. I groaned in pity for myself, for this close guarding—you see, I could treat the old woman with contempt, and it was possible to escape from her prying eyes, but the young man was big, and his gaze was terrifying, and he was always carrying his sword, and he always kept the door shut.

## ENTER THE MAIDEN

22. Three days later, approximately at midnight, the robbers make their way back, bringing with them nothing of gold, nothing of silver, nothing else at all except for a solitary maiden, young, extraordinarily beautiful, but weeping, her clothes torn, her hair torn at. They set her down inside on layers of straw and kept telling her *Courage!*; they kept telling the old woman to stay inside from then on and to keep watch over the child. Now the child did not want to eat anything, or drink anything, but she kept on weeping for everything that had happened and kept on tearing at her hair. Naturally, I wept in sympathy along with that beautiful maiden, as I stood close by, next to my manger.

During this time the robbers were outside, in their vestibule, eating. Around daybreak, one of the guards, those assigned to keep watch over the roads, came in with the announcement that a stranger would soon be in the vicinity, bringing with him a lot of money. And they got right up, just as they were, and they strapped on their weapons and they saddled up me and the horse and started to drive us along. And I, fool that I was, in the understanding that we were being driven out to battle and war, was going forward only recalcitrantly; consequently, I was being walloped with the cudgel as they forced us along. And when we came to the road where the stranger was about to pass

by, the robbers fell on his convoy, killed him and his slaves, took out all that was most valuable, and loaded that onto me and the horse, but all the rest of the baggage they hid there in the woods. And then they were driving us back, just like this, and I, being forced along and being walloped with the cudgel, I strike my hoof against a sharp rock, and from *this* blow I get an excruciating wound, and because of that I was limping as I walked the rest of our route.

Now they were saying to each other, "I mean, why do we think it's a good idea to keep feeding this ass here, falling down forever and again? Let's throw him over the cliff! He is a bird of ill omen."

"Yes," he says, "let's throw him over, so he can be an atonement for our army."

Indeed, they were plotting against me, but when I heard this, this being the situation, I went walking on my wound thereafter as if it were someone else's, and fear of death made me insensitive to my pain.

23. When we got inside at the place where we were staying, they took the baggage off of our shoulders and put it down neatly; they themselves reclined at table and were eating. And when it was night, they went away to recover and save the remainder of their baggage.

"Now this here wretched ass," one of them said, "why are we driving him along, as useless as he is because of that hoof? We'll carry some of the baggage, and the horse will carry the rest."

And they went off, leading the horse. Now the night was brilliantly clear, because of the moon, and it was then that I said to myself, "You wretched thing, are you still staying here? Why? Vultures and the offspring of vultures will have you for their lunch. Don't you hear the plans that they made about you? Do you want to tumble over that cliff? Look at this night! There's a lot of moon, and they are going away and are gone! Save yourself from these man-slaughtering masters! Escape!"

And while I'm thinking these things to myself, I saw that I hadn't been tied to anything, and that the strap, the one that dragged me when out on the roads, was left

hanging by my side. And this spurred me on most insistently toward escaping; I set out at a run and I was off on my way. The old woman, when she saw that I was ready to bolt, grabbed onto me by the tail and was holding tight. I said that my being captured by an old woman made me well worthy of the cliff and any and every other death besides, and so I was dragging her, and she let out a yell to rouse the maiden, the captive, who was inside. She came forward, saw that the old Dirce had latched herself onto the ass, and she dares a noble daring, one worthy of a daredevil man. What? She leapt up onto me and after she sat astride me she urged me onward. And I, because of my longing for escape, and because of the maiden's enthusiasm as well, was escaping at the pace of a horse.

The old woman had been left behind. The maiden was praying to the gods that they save her through this escape, but to me she said, "If you ever bring me home, my pretty, to my father, I will set you free from all work, and there will be a bushel of barley for you each and every day for breakfast."

So I, in order to escape from my murderers, and in high hopes as well of extravagant care and feeding at the hands of the maiden after she was saved and restored by me—I was running along, without a care for my wound. 24. And when we came to where the road divided three ways, our adversaries surprised us on their return trip. Immediately and from a long way off, by the light of the moon, they recognized their luckless captives. They run up, lay hold of me, and say, "O you beautiful, noble maiden, where are you going in the dead of night? So put upon! Aren't you afraid of ghosts and spirits? But you just come here to us, and we will give you back to your nearest and dearest," they said through their cruel laughter, and they turned me right around and started dragging me back.

And I was reminded again of my foot and my wound, and I was limping, and they said, "Now you're limping when you were caught while galloping away? But when you decided to run away, you were healthy, swifter than a horse—you had wings!"

The cudgel came out after these words, and I already had a gaping wound in my flank from their reprimands. And when we returned back inside, we found the old woman hanging by a rope from a crag. You see, she was afraid of her masters, as was reasonable, because of the escape of the maiden; she tied herself tight around her neck and hanged herself. They admired the old woman for her compliance. They took her down from the crag to the cliff and threw her over, just as she was, rope and all; the maiden they trussed up inside. Then they ate, and the drinking went on a long time.

25. And during this time they were already talking back and forth among themselves about the girl.

“How do we handle her,” one of them said, “this runaway?”

“How else?” another said. “Just like the old woman, let’s throw her over! After all, she robbed us of a lot of our valuables—as much as she could—and she betrayed our whole base of operations. Take it as a fact, my friends: if she had gotten hold of her family at home, not a one of us would have been left alive, but we all would have been taken, our rivals falling on us with malice aforethought. So let’s have our revenge on our adversary, this woman! On the other hand, let’s not let her die *that* easily, falling off a rock. No—let’s devise a death for her that is the most excruciating, the most drawn out, one that will keep her alive through time and torture and will kill her later on.”

So they were then casting about for this death, and somebody said, “I know that you’ll approve of *this*, a master plan. This recalcitrant ass must be done away with, and especially now, lying about being lame—and to top it off, he’s turned into the confidant and accomplice of the maiden’s escape. At dawn, then, let’s slit his throat and cut him open at the belly. Let’s heave his guts out, everything, and this fair maiden here, let’s lodge her inside the ass: her head outside the ass and accessible, so that she won’t be asphyxiated too fast, but all the rest of her body hidden inside, so that when she’s lying there we can sew her up good and tight and toss both of them outside together. A

breakfast most unprecedentedly prepared, this is, for the vultures.

“But consider closely, my friends, the true monstrosity of this torture: first, being housed inside the dead ass; then, in this summer season when the sun is at its hottest, to be broiled inside a beast; and to die by hunger, a slow and steady assassin; and not even being able to strangle herself! Now as for all the other things she’ll suffer as the beast rots away—the smell, her flesh crawling with worms—no need to mention that. At the end, the vultures, as they work their way inside, perforating the ass, will tear her apart just like him, and maybe she’ll still be alive!”

26. They all let out a great cry as if this monstrosity of ingenuity were some wonderful thing they were approving of. Me? I was moaning for myself—I was going to be slaughtered and wasn’t even going to lie at rest, a blessed corpse, but would become, after I had welcomed the poor maiden in, a coffin for a guiltless girl.

But it was still dawn when all of a sudden a company of soldiers is on the scene, having come for just these abominations, and promptly they put them all in chains and led them away to the regional governor. And it just so happened that the man who was betrothed to the girl had come along with them; in fact, he was the one who betrayed the robbers’ hideout. And so he lifted up that maiden of his, set her down on my back, and this was the way he led her home. And when those who lived in their village caught sight of us, they all realized, even from a long way off, that we were doing fine, since I had been on ahead, braying out the good news. They came running out, throwing their arms around us, and leading us on inside.

## MISFORTUNES ON THE FARM

27. Now the maiden did right by me and made a good, long account of me, who had been a captive with her, and had escaped with her, and had faced with her that same

dreadful death that was in store for her. And for me [. . .] lunch was served: a bushel of barley and hay enough to stuff a camel. And it was at that point that I particularly called down curses on Palaestra, she who had by her art turned me into an ass and not a dog. You see, I was watching their dogs going on into the kitchen and lapping up everything, all the sorts of things you'd expect at the weddings of wealthy couples.

It wasn't many days later, after the wedding, when my mistress, in the presence of her father, said she owed me a debt of gratitude, and he, wanting to pay me back a right payment, gave the order that I was to be set free, under the open sky, to graze with the free-range mares.

"That's right," he said. "He will live free and at his own pleasure, and he will mount the mares."

And at the time this seemed to be the most right of all repayments, if all these matters were up before an ass as a judge. Consequently, he called for one of his stablemen, and he handed me over to him, and I was overjoyed—I'd never carry a burden again. And when we came to that field, the horseherd put me in among the mares, and started to lead us, the whole herd, out to pasture, 28. but just then—surprise!—it had to happen to me just as it happened to Candaules. The horses' stablemaster, you see, abandoned me to his wife, Megapole—Mrs. Crank—*inside*, and she started to hook me up to the grindstone so I could grind her wheat for her and all her barley.

Now to do the grinding for his own masters was an equitable evil for a thankful ass, but this prize of a woman was renting out my own miserable neck for the benefit of all the other neighbors round about those fields—and there were quite a lot of them—claiming flour as her fee. Now the barley that was my lunch she roasted and tossed in the hopper for me to grind; she made all the loaves and wolfed them down herself, while for me, my lunch was bran. And whenever the horseherd did herd me out along with the mares, it'd be the death of me, constantly walloped and bitten by the stallions. You see, as they always suspected that I was some seducer of their wives, they would chase after

me and kick out at me, front hooves and back—ultimately, I couldn't endure their racehorse rivalry. And so it wasn't long before I became emaciated, unrecognizable, happy neither when indoors at the mill nor when grazing in the open air, being under attack by my fellow grazers.

29. And to top it all off, I was more often than not sent on up the mountain and was carrying firewood on my shoulders. This was the perfection of all my tribulations. In the first place, I had to toil up a high mountain, a path dreadfully steep; second, I was shoeless as well, up a flinty mountain. And they sent an ass driver to accompany me, an abominable little boy, and every time he'd give me the works in some novel way. First, he'd wallop me, even when I was running very fast, and not with a club pure and simple, but with one that had knots, thick-set and sharp, and he'd always wallop me in the same part of my haunch. As a result, because of that staff, my haunch was laid open at that spot. And he'd always wallop that wound. Second, he'd put a load on me so big that it would have been a struggle even for an elephant to carry it. And the way down from on high was precipitous, and he'd wallop me then too. And whenever he saw the load shifting on me and leaning from one to the other side, well, taking some of the wood off and sticking it into the lighter side and making it even—this was a course he *never* pursued, but he would pick up big rocks from the mountainside and add them to the lighter part of the bundle, the part inching its way upward. And I would go back down in misery because of the firewood, while carrying as well those useless rocks. And there was a river running year-round that crossed the road. And he would take pity on his shoes and cross that river sitting on me and behind the firewood.

30. And if I ever fell down while struggling with and bearing such loads, that was when the horror was unbearable. Why? When he would have had the opportunity to get down and offer me a hand and lift me up from the ground and remove my burden, he didn't even offer me a hand but—standing over me, starting from my head and from my ears—he would keep on walloping me with that

club until the beatings stood me back up. And to top it off, he used to play another little unbearable game to get at me. He put together a bundle of the sharpest brambles and bound it round with a rope. This he would hang behind me from my tail, and the brambles, hanging off me, would, as you'd expect, while I was walking down the road, keep on bouncing into me and would, pricking all my hindquarters, mutilate me to no end. And it was impossible for me to defend myself, because the brambles that were mutilating me were always following me—were, in fact, attached to me. Consider: if I walked on along slow and unswaying, on my guard against attack from the brambles, then I'd get the works because of the wood; if I avoided his club, then immediately that horror would bounce sharp into me from behind. In a word, my driver's sole occupation was killing me.

31. And when it happened once that I, just once, suffering all these tribulations and able to bear them no longer, struck out at him with a kick of my hoof, he kept that kick of mine constantly in mind. And one time he gets the order to transport some hemp from one district to another district. So he brought me round and gathered together a great quantity of hemp and tied it down on me and then, with a knot tied really good and painful, he bound me to my burden, thus concocting a terrific tribulation for me. And so, when we needed to get going, he stole a stick from the hearth, still red-hot, and when we were some distance from the yard, he buried this stick deep inside the hemp. And that stick—I mean, what else *could* happen?—instantly ignites and I, consequently, was carrying nothing but one enormous fire.

And as I realized that I would be roasted in no time, and as I had just come across a deep pool of stagnant water in the road, I threw myself into the wettest part of the pool. Then I rolled the hemp around in that and I, by rolling myself over and twisting myself around, extinguished that hot fire in the mud and extinguished that painful burden as well and so it was in this way that I walked the

remainder of the road in relative safety. You see, the boy wasn't able to set me on fire, as the hemp had been soaked in wet mud. And yet that shameless boy here too told a lie about me when he got back—he said that I of my own free will brushed myself against the hearth as I walked past it.

So that time I escaped from the hemp, even though I hadn't expected to, **32.** but that abominable boy invented something else to get at me, far and away worse. You see, he brought me on up the mountain and put a massive load of firewood on me. This he sold to an old man living nearby, but me he brought back home naked and woodless and, in the presence of the same master, makes a false accusation against me of an unholy activity.

"Master, this ass here—I don't know why we feed him. He's terribly lazy and slow and, not only that, he's now up to something else again. Whenever he sees a woman, or a maiden, lovely and ripe, or a boy, he kicks and he goes on after them at a run, like some human man loves his beloved woman when he's aroused, and he bites them—that's his imposture of a kiss—and he forces them to have sex. And it's because of this that he'll bring you lawsuits and hassles, what with everybody being assaulted and everybody being knocked to the ground. Yes! Even now while carrying firewood he saw a woman going off into the field: he shook off all the firewood, scattered it on the ground, knocked the woman flat on the road, and had it in mind to make her his bride, until people came running from here and from there and protected the woman from being split in two by this pretty little lover here."

**33.** And when he was made aware of all this, the master said, "Well! If he doesn't want to walk and he doesn't want to carry loads and he loves the love that humans have, pricked on to lust after women and boys, then slaughter him! Give the guts to the dogs and keep the flesh for the field hands. And if *he* asks, 'How did he die?,' blame it on a wolf!"

So that abominable boy, my driver, was delighted—he wanted to slaughter me then and there. Wanted to—but

one of the neighboring farmers happened to be present, and he snatched me from this death because he had dreadful designs upon me.

"No way!" he said. "Don't slaughter an ass that can grind grain and bear burdens. And this is no big deal. Since, as you say, he's driven to humans by lust and the erotic itch, just take and castrate him. You see, once he's sequestered from that Aphroditic assaulting of his, he'll be docile in an instant, and fat, and he'll carry a big load without being burdened at all. Now if you don't have any experience yourself in this sort of surgery, I'll come back here in three or four days and I'll present you with an ass gentler than a lamb—one snip!"

Now everyone inside had words of praise for this adviser, for how well he spoke, but I was already in tears because I was about to lose then and there the man inside the ass, and I kept saying that I didn't want to live any longer if I was going to become a eunuch. Consequently, I was resolved to starve myself from that point on, whole-ly, or to throw myself off a mountain, where, though I would fall to a most pitiable death, I would at least die in one piece, an intact corpse.

## IN THE SERVICE OF THE SYRIAN PRIESTS

34. When it was the dead of night a messenger came from the village out into the field and the farmhouse, bringing word that this just-married woman—the one who had been with the robbers—and this woman's husband, both of them, while out walking late in the evening along the seashore, the sea suddenly rose up and snatched them away and made them disappear, and that was the end of them, disaster and death.

And seeing as how it was now an estate bereft of a *young* master and mistress, the rest resolved to remain in slavery no longer; instead, they ransacked the interior of the farmstead completely and made for safety by running

away. The horseherd took me along with him, and after he grabbed everything that he could he tied it all onto me and the horses and some other beasts. Now I took it hard that I was carrying the burden of a real live ass; all the same, I embraced this gladly as an obstruction to my castration. And all that night long we traveled on, a hard journey, and after three further days we finished our journey and we came to a city in Macedonia: Beroea, magnificent, teeming with people.

35. Those who were leading us determined that they too would settle down in this place. And it was at that point that there was an auctioning off of us animals, and a crier with a good loud voice took up his position in the middle of the marketplace and started to cry the lot. And people were coming up, wanting to open our mouths and inspect them, and they were trying to search out the age of each of us by our teeth. And some of us they bought, one taking one, another another, but me, the last one left behind—the crier started to give the order for me to be led back home again.

“You see,” he said, “that this one only has found no master.”

But Nemesis, spinning everything round and round, transforming things again and again, brought a master even to me, one such as I would never have hoped for. You see, he was a pervert and an old man, one of those who carry the Syrian goddess around to villages and fields, compelling the goddess to be a beggar. This is the man I’m sold to, and at a very substantial price: thirty drachmas. And I was already groaning as I followed my master as he led me.

36. And when we came to the place where Philebus lived—yes, this was the name, Loverboy, that the man who bought me had—immediately, right in front of the door, he bellowed aloud, “Girls! I’ve bought you a slave: gorgeous, massive, and a Cappadocian by birth!”

Now these girls were a *crowd* of perverts, Philebus’s confederates, and they all clapped their hands at the sound of his shouting; they thought, you see, that what he

had bought really was a man. But when they saw that the slave was an ass, they started right in mocking Philebus this way:

“It’s not a slave but a husband for yourself that you’ve brought here! Where did you get him from? An asset indeed! Let’s hope that from this wedding you’ll soon breed us a brood of foals just like him!”

37. So they laughed, on and on. But on the next day they drew themselves up for the job at hand—that was their word for it—and after they adorned their goddess they put her up on my back. Next, we took our time riding out of the city and traveling around the countryside. But whenever we came to some village, I, as the conveyance of the goddess, would stand stock-still, and the flute player, the whole mob of them, would blow something inspired, and the rest of them would whip off their headwraps and, while swiveling their heads round and round from the base of their necks, would slash and slash their forearms with their swords; sticking their tongues out over their teeth, they would slash them too, each one of them, so that, in no time at all, everything was awash in effeminate blood.

Now when I saw all this, I stood there and shuddered for fear that the goddess could conceive of a desire for an ass’s blood as well. But, whenever they cut themselves like this, they would take up a collection of obols and drachmas from the audience that gathered around them. One put in dried figs; another, wine, or a pot of cottage cheese, or a bushel of wheat or barley for the ass. And it was from such donations as these that they attended to their own needs and took care of the goddess who was riding on my back.

38. Then one day, after we had invaded one of their villages, they ensnared one of the villagers—a young man and a big one—and they escorted him inside where they happened to have taken up lodging. Then they were receiving the sort of treatment from that villager such as was customary and desirable for such godless perverts as these. And I was beyond upset because of my change of form—I’m putting up with my misfortunes up to this point—and

I wanted to cry out, "O merciless Zeus!" but the voice that came up for me was not mine—no, but the voice of an ass, up from the throat, and I let out a loud bray.

Now it happened that at that time some of the villagers had lost an ass, and as they were looking for what they had lost they heard me crying my loud cry and they came inside, saying not a word to anyone, believing that I was the one that belonged to them, and they caught those perverts inside, in the act, performing their unspeakable acts, and the laughter that arose from the ones who had come upon them was grand indeed. They ran outside and told the whole village about the debauchery of the priests, a strict accounting. Now they were greatly shamed by these stories that were told about them and when night came they rode straight out of there. And when they were out in the wilderness they were upset because of the journey and they were angry at me because I was the one who betrayed their mysteries.

Now the one sore trial was tolerable, to hear myself spoken ill of, a strict accounting, but the things that happened next were not tolerable. You see, they took the goddess off of me and laid her down on the ground; after they spread out all of my trappings and coverings they tied me, naked, to a big tree, and then while beating me with that whip of theirs, the one made of the knucklebones, they came very close to killing me, commanding me that from then on I be a closemouthed conveyance for the goddess. In fact, they had planned to kill me after the whipping, because I had brought them into such a great outrage, and because I had brought them out of the village when they had not yet completed their business. But the goddess, lying on the ground and having no way to travel onward, disconcerted them greatly, and so they did not kill me.

39. And so, after the whippings, I took up the goddess and made my way on from there. Right around nightfall we turned in at the estate of a wealthy man. The man was in and with great delight he took the goddess into his home and set out before her some sacrificial offerings. It was there that I became aware that I was exposed to my

greatest danger. Some one of his friends had sent as a gift to the lord of this estate the haunch of a wild ass. The cook took it to prepare it but lost it due to laziness—a large pack of dogs had entered in unobserved. He was afraid of the many beatings and the torture he'd get because of the loss of the haunch and so he decided to hang himself by the neck. But the man's wife—my personal and unparalleled evil—said:

"Don't die, my beloved; no, and don't make yourself the victim of your laziness either. You see, if you listen to me, you'll come out all right. Take the ass that belongs to those perverts out to some deserted spot and slaughter it; then cut off that part, the haunch, and bring it here; then prepare it and give it to the master; then throw the remainder of the ass away, down over some cliff. That way, he'll seem to have run away and escaped to somewhere and will be nowhere to be seen. And you see how fat and sleek he is, better in every way than that wild one."

The cook praised his wife's stratagem.

"My wife," he said, "this is you at your best, and by this one single act I can escape the whippings. Yes, indeed—I shall make it so!"

This godless man, standing right next to me, *my* cook, was making these plans with his wife. 40. Now I could see in advance what was coming and I thought it best to save myself from the knife. I snap the strap that I was led in by and, with a buck and a bound, I bolt in at a run to where the perverts were feasting with the lord of the estate. And after I run in I overturn everything with my bucking—the lampstand and the tables too. Now I thought that I'd come up with this clever device for my own salvation, and that the master of the estate would be quick to give the order that I be kept under lock and key somewhere and be guarded securely as a high-spirited ass, but this clever device brought me to the depth of disaster. They thought I was acting rabid and they drew their swords against me—a lot of them—and their spears, and big clubs too, and so they made as though they were going to kill me. Now I, seeing the enormity of the catastrophe, go on past

them at a run inside to where my masters were going to bed down. Once they saw that, they lock the door from the outside, good and tight.

41. And when it was dawn already I took up the goddess and was on my way again along with the wandering beggars. We arrived at another village—magnificent, teeming with people—and there they made an unparalleled proclamation: the goddess was not to stay in the house of a mortal man, but was rather to dwell in the shrine of whatever local female divine spirit was held most in honor among them. The villagers received the foreign goddess with great delight indeed and quartered her along with their own goddess; but as for us, they pointed us to the house of some poor folk. My masters spent a number of days there and then wanted to be on their way to the next city over and asked the locals for their goddess back. They went to the holy precinct themselves and carried her out and put her on me and rode on out. But it just so happened that these wicked people, when they went to that precinct, stole a golden chalice, a dedication. When the villagers discovered this they were immediately in pursuit of them and then, when they got close, they leapt off of their horses and tried to restrain them right there on the road. *Wicked!* they called them and *Temple robbers!* and they were trying to get back the dedication that had been stolen, and while they were rummaging through everything they found it in the bosom of the goddess. Accordingly, they tied up those sissies and led them back; then they threw into their prison; the goddess that was carried on my back they lifted off and gave to another shrine; the golden thing they gave back again to the small-town goddess.

## THE ASS CHANGES HANDS

42. The next day they decided to sell my baggage and me as well, and they gave me over to a foreigner who lived in the next town over, whose trade was baking bread. This

man took me, bought some dozen bushels of wheat, put the wheat on me, and was off on his way to his house, a difficult journey. And after we get there, he leads me into the millhouse, and I see within a great herd of livestock, my companions in slavery—and there were many millstones, and all of them were being turned by them, and everything there was full of flour. At that point, seeing as how I was a new slave and had carried a very heavy load and had arrived after a difficult journey, they gave me time off so I could rest and recuperate inside. But on the next day, after they spread a linen cloth over my eyes, they hooked me up to the shaft of my mill, and then I was on my way.

Now I was aware how grain had to be ground, as I'd encountered this many times before, but I was pretending that I didn't know. But I hoped in vain. You see, many of the men inside grabbed sticks. They stand around and—I hadn't expected it because I couldn't see it—they pummel me with a *copious* hand. The result: all of a sudden I am made to turn by the force of the beating as if I were a top. And so I learned by experience that a slave ought not wait for the hand of the master for doing the things he needs to do.

43. And so I was becoming emaciated and weak in my body; as a result, my master decided to sell me, and he handed me over to a man who was a truck farmer by trade; that is, he had gotten a garden and was farming it. And this was the labor that we had: my master would put his vegetables on me in the morning and would take them to the marketplace and after handing them over to those who sold them he would lead me back again into his garden. And then he would dig and he would plant and he would water his vegetables, but I would stand by idle all the while. And my life at that time was most agonizing for me: first, because it was already winter and he hadn't the wherewithal to buy straw for himself, let alone for me; and I was walking unshod on oozing mud (and on ice), very stiff and stabbing; and to eat, there was this only for the both of us, lettuce—bitter and stiff.

44. One day, when we were heading out back to his garden, a noble gentleman crossed our path, wearing a soldier's cloak. He spoke to us in the Latin language at first, and he kept asking the farmer where he was taking his ass—me. It was, I think, because he didn't know the language that he kept on not answering. But the soldier gets angry, believing himself to be insulted, and he beats the farmer with his stick; the farmer grabs hold of him, knocks his feet out from under him, and lays him out flat on the road. And as he lay there just like that, he kept on beating him, with his hands, with his feet, and with a rock from the roadside. At first, he was fighting back, and making threats as well, that he would kill him with his sword, if he ever got up. The other, as if he'd just been taught a lesson by that soldier, avoiding trouble at all costs, pulls out the soldier's sword and throws it far away, and then went on beating him anew as he lay there. And he, seeing that his misery was by now unendurable, fakes being dead, a victim of this beating.

The other, horrified by this, abandons the man lying there, just as he was, but the sword he loaded on and then went off on his way to the city. 45. After we arrived, he gave his garden over to some fellow farmer to farm; as for himself, out of fear for the trouble he had had on the road, he goes into hiding along with me at the house of one of his friends in the town. On the next day, as they had decided, so do they do. My master they hid in a chest; they lift me up by my feet and carry me upward by ladder into an attic chamber and there they lock me in, high above.

Now at that point the soldier stood himself up again—with difficulty, so they said—up off the road, his head aching from the beating, and he got himself to the city. He runs into the soldiers who were in his company and he tells them about the crazy behavior of the farmer. After he and his companions arrive they discover where we had been hidden and they call in the city magistrates. And they send inside one of their subordinates and give the order that all who are inside are to come outside. But when they came out the farmer was nowhere to be seen.

Now the soldiers said that indeed the farmer was inside, and that I was too—his ass, that is. But the others said that not a single thing had been left behind, neither man nor ass. As a ruckus was now starting in the alleyway, and shouting back and forth between these parties, I, full of self-assurance and sticking my nose into everything, and wanting to find out who these people were who were doing the shouting, I poked my head out from on high, bending down through the little window. Those who saw me instantly let out a shout, and they were caught telling lies, and the magistrates themselves went inside and, searching everywhere up and down, they found my master lying in that chest. They arrested him and sent him to their jail to stand accountable for what he had dared to do, but me they carried down and handed over to the soldiers. And all of them were laughing—*unquenchably*, as Homer says—at the one who from the attic story had denounced and betrayed his own master. And it was then and from me for the first time that there came into the world of men this proverb: *All because an ass stuck his nose out.*

## BOARD AND BED

46. On the following day, what happened to my master the gardener I have no idea, but the soldier decided that he would sell me, and he disposed of me for twenty-five Attic drachmas. And the one who bought me was the servant of a very wealthy man of the city that was the greatest of all those in Macedonia—Thessalonice. And this was the trade he had: he used to prepare the meals for his master, and he had his brother too as a fellow slave, and he knew how to bake bread and prepare honey cakes. These brothers always sat at table with each other, and had their rooms in the same place, and they kept the tools of their trades all jumbled together, and from then on they set me up too in the place where they had their rooms.

And after their master's dinner they both used to bring back home all these leftovers: the one, of meat and fish; the other, of bread and desserts. And they locked me up inside with these leftovers and they set up this sweetest possible custody around me and then went off to bathe. I said good riddance to the barley that was set before me and I started in giving myself over to the skills of my masters and to their creations, and I was after this long time really stuffing myself full of human food. Now when they came back inside they didn't at first realize a thing about this fine dining of mine because of the abundance of the things set before me, and because I was still stealing my meal parsimoniously and in trepidation. But when I realized their utter ignorance I started in wolfing down the very finest of these portions and many other things besides, and when they were just realizing the extent of their loss, at first they would each look at the other with suspicion, and *Thief!* each would call the other and *Common poacher!* and *Utterly shameless!*, and they were both careful counters from then on, and there was a tallying of the portions.

47. I maintained this life in pleasure and self-indulgence, and because of this diet, the one I was once accustomed to, my body had grown beautiful again, and my skin glistened, and the hair grew downy upon it. Now these most noble gentlemen, seeing that I was big and fat, and that the barley was not being consumed but was at the same level, arrived at a suspicion of my daring deeds, and after they went out (as if going off to the baths) and locked the door, they applied their eyes to a little chink in the door and were observing what was inside. Now I at that time was not at all aware of their trick, and I walked right up and started in chowing down. At first they were laughing as they watched this unbelievable meal, but then they called their fellow slaves in to look at me, and the laughter was great; consequently, the master heard their laughter, there being a ruckus outside, and he started to ask what it was that those outside were laughing so much about.

And after he heard he actually gets up from his dinner party and, peeking down inside, he sees me gulping down a cut of wild boar. He lets out a great hoot of laughter and then trots on inside. Now I was very upset with the master, having been caught out both as a thief and as a glutton, but he kept on directing his ample laughter toward me, and at first gave the order that I was to be led inside to his dinner party, and then he said that a table was to be set in front of me and that many things were to be upon it such as no other ass could gulp down—meat, oysters, soup, fish—some lying in fish sauce and olive oil, some sprinkled with mustard. And I saw Fortune herself now smiling gently upon me and as I realized that it was only this entertainment that would save and restore me, although I was already stuffed full, I began chowing down all the same, standing in front of the table. Waves of laughter crashed over the dinner party. And someone said, “This ass drinks wine as well, if someone wants to mix a cup and give it to him.” And the master gave the order and I drank the cup that was offered.

48. And he, just as you’d expect, sees in me a mind-boggling possession, and he gives the order to one of his treasurers to pay out my price to the one who had bought me, and that much again. He handed me over to one of his freedmen, a young man, and told him to train me in various ways, such that I could beguile him when I did them. Now all this was certainly quite easy for him, because I would obey him right away when instructed in each and every thing. First he had me lie down on a banqueting couch, on the elbow, like a human being; then had me wrestle with him; not only that, but he had me stand up straight on two feet and dance, and nod my head *No* and nod my head *Yes* in response to voice commands, and to do all the other things that I could do even without being taught.

And the business was widely celebrated: the ass, the master’s ass, a drinker of wine, a wrestler; THE DANCING Ass. But the biggest thing of all was nodding *Yes* in response to commands, and nodding *No*, at the appropriate times.

And whenever I wanted to drink, I would prod the wine steward and ask with my eyes. And they were amazed at this business as if it were mind-boggling, as they did not know that there was a human being lying in the ass. But I turned this ignorance of theirs to my own self-indulgence.

Not only that, but I began to learn to walk and to carry my master on my back, to run at a run that was least uncomfortable—and most imperceptible—to my rider. And my get-up was very expensive: I was covered in purple blankets, and I had bits that were tricked out in silver and gold, and they attached bells on me that broadcast a most musical sound.

49. Now Meneclis, our master, as I was saying, had arrived there from Thessalonice on a mission, as follows: he had undertaken to provide his native city with a spectacle [of men in armor who knew how to fight each other one-on-one]. The men for the fight were already in training, and our marching orders had arrived. We got out on the road at dawn, and I was carrying my master whenever the terrain was rough along the road and difficult for the wagons to cross. And when we came down into Thessalonice there was no one who wasn't hurrying to the spectacle and to catch sight of me. My reputation, you see, had far preceded me: my many facial expressions, the human aspect of my dancing positions and my wrestling moves.

Now it was only to the most distinguished of the citizens there that my master would display me over the wine and submit for approval at dinner those mind-boggling entertainments that were in me. 50. But my overseer discovered a means of profit from me—very many drachmas indeed. You see, he shut me up inside and kept me standing for those who wanted to see me and my mind-boggling deeds for a price. And they would bring me things to eat—one, one kind; another, another—but especially food that was antithetical to the digestion of an ass. But I would eat it. The result? Within a few days, by chowing down together both with the master and with the city folk, I had already grown big and astoundingly fat.

And one time there is this foreign woman—in possession of no small fortune and nice enough to look at—who comes inside to watch me chowing down and falls in love, hot-blooded love, with me. It's partly because she sees the beauty of the ass, and partly because of the mind-boggling nature of my way of life, but she goes all the way to a desire for intercourse. She has a conversation with my overseer: she offers him a massive amount of money if he would allow her to stay with me the whole night. And he, without any concern whether she would get anything out of me or not, takes the money.

51. And when it was night already and the master had dismissed us from the dinner party, we headed back again to where we were bedded down. And we found the woman, long since arrived, upon my bed. Now soft pillows had been arranged for her, and bedding laid out within, and a low bed was at our disposal. Next, the woman's attendants went off to sleep somewhere close outside the bedroom, while she set alight a great lamp inside, a blazing fire. And then, after she removed her clothes, she stood at the lamp entirely naked; she poured out some myrrh from an alabaster bottle and she anointed herself with it and she rubbed me with myrrh from that as well—my nose in particular she stuffed up with myrrh—and she kissed me and was saying such things as she'd say to a lover—a human lover. Then she grabbed me by the halter and started dragging me to the bed.

And I, in no need of a third to encourage me to it, being steeped in much old wine, my skin all excited, and seeing that the girl is beautiful in every way, I lie down, but I was very much at a loss as to how to mount this human woman. You see, ever since I became an ass, I happened to have had no experience of intercourse, not even the kind customary for asses; not only that, but this drove me to no mean fear, that she, in accommodating me, might be split in two, and I would pay a pretty price as if I were a murderer. But I had no idea that my fear was unnecessary, for the woman kept calling me onward with many a kiss,

many a lusty kiss, and when she saw that I was not controlling myself, she lay down next to me compatibly as if I were a man; she embraced me, and after she raised it up she took it inside her, all of it. But I was a coward and was still afraid and was trying to back myself out, bit by bit, but she kept hold of me by my groin so that I couldn't retreat, and she kept on pursuing it as it kept on trying to escape. But after I was so rigorously persuaded that still more was required of me in the matter of this woman's rapture and delight, I was in her service thereafter without fear, figuring that I was in no way worse than Pasiphaë's seducer. And so it was that the woman herself was so ready for the deeds of Aphrodite and so insatiable for the delights of intercourse that she exhausted that whole night courtesy of my efforts.

52. When day came she got up and was on her way after arranging with my overseer that she would bring the same payment on the same terms that night. And he, being simultaneously richer because of my performance and intending to show the master something really new, courtesy of my efforts, locks me in with the woman, and she kept wearing me out, hard at it. At some point my overseer goes to the master and reports this business to him, as if he himself had coached me in it. I have no idea what's happening, but he brings him in the evening to where we were bedded down, and through a chink in the door he shows me lying in bed with the young woman. And he was delighted with the spectacle and took a fancy to display me doing these things in public assembly. And he gives the order that the overseer not speak a word of this to anyone outside, "The reason being," he said, "that on the day of the spectacle we can lead this ass into the theater with one of the women who have been condemned to death and he will mount that woman plain for all to see." And one of these women, one who had been sentenced to be killed by wild beasts, they led inside right up to me and they kept on ordering her to approach me and to put her hands on me.

## THE SPECTACLE

53. And then, the very end. After that day had dawned, the day in which my master was to put his glorious munificence on display, they determined to lead me into the theater. And this is how I went in. There was a huge bed, fashioned of Indian tortoiseshell, bound round with gold, and they made me lie down upon it, and there they lay the woman alongside of me. Then they put us, just like this, on a movable stage, and after they brought us inside, into the theater, they set us down in the middle. And the people let out a great shout, and applause for me rebounded from every hand, and a table was set before us and there were many things prepared and set upon it such as people who live in luxury have at their dinner. And slave boys had taken up their positions next to us, wine pourers, beautiful boys, supplying us wine in golden goblets. Now my overseer stood behind me and kept on ordering me to chow down, but I—I was ashamed to be lying in the theater, and at the same time I was afraid that a bear or a lion would leap out from somewhere.

54. In the midst of this I see in among the other flowers the petals of fresh roses and without any further hesitation I tumble out of the bed with a bound. Now they were thinking that I was getting up to dance, but I ran at them and, one by one, I plucked the roses from out of those flowers and was bolting them down. And while they are all still staring at me, amazed, that face-of-a-beast falls down off me and disintegrates and that quondam ass is nowhere to be seen and Lucius himself, my inner man, stands there naked. Everyone was dumbstruck by this spectacle—mind-boggling, never even hoped for—and it made them raise a deafening roar, and the theater divided itself up into two factions. You see, some were of the opinion that I, as a master of dreadful potions and some kind of evil shape-shifter, should die by fire immediately and within the confines, others that they should wait; they said that they needed explanations from me and to make a determination beforehand, and then to judge about

these matters on that basis. And I ran up to the governor of the province—he just happened to be present at this spectacle—and I kept telling him from down below that a Thessalian woman, the slave of a Thessalian woman, had rubbed an enchanted oil on me and made me into an ass, and I kept begging him to arrest me and keep me under guard until such time as I could persuade him that I wasn't making up a story as to how I came to be this way.

55. And the governor said, "Tell us your name and the names of your parents and the names of your relatives—whatever relations you claim to have by birth—and your city too."

And I said, "My father's name is Lucius, and the name of my brother is Gaius, and the two of us have our other two names in common. And I am a writer of histories, among other things, while my brother is a poet—a writer of elegies—and an excellent diviner. Patras in Achaea is our homeland."

Now when the judge heard these things he said, "You are the son of men exceedingly dear to me, men who as hosts have received me into their homes and honored me with their gifts, and I know well that you tell no lie since you are a child of such as they."

He leapt up from his chair of office and he threw his arms around me; he kissed me many times, and was starting to lead me off homeward, to his own house. And it was then that my brother arrived as well, bringing me money and many other necessities, and it was then that the governor, in public assembly, while everyone was listening, released me. And we went down to the sea, determined on a ship, and put our baggage aboard.

## STORISENDE

56. But I figured that it was imperative that I go visit the woman, the one who had been loved by me when I was the ass, saying to myself that I would appear more beautiful to

her, being now in a human being. And she welcomed me in gladly, being enraptured, doubtless, by the mind-boggling nature of this state of affairs, and she begged me to dine with her and to sleep with her. And I was compliant, considering that it would be a thing worthy of the goddess Nemesis herself if the ass—the one who had been loved and was now become a human being—should lead such a discriminating life as to disdain the woman who had loved him.

And I'm dining with her and I'm anointing myself generously from her myrrh bottle and I'm putting on a crown of roses, my dearest roses, that had saved and restored me to the world of men. And when it was already deep in the night and it was time to sleep with her, I stand up and, as if I'm doing some wonderful thing, I take off my clothes and I'm standing there naked, certain that I was about to please her that much more, given the contrast vis-à-vis the ass. But she, when she saw that all the parts I had were human parts, spat at me and said, "To hell with you! Get away from me! Get away from my house! Go somewhere else, anywhere else, far from here and sleep there!"

And when I asked, "But why? What crime have I committed that's so awful?" she said, "Zeus above! I wasn't in love with you at all but with the ass that was you; that's why I slept with him then and not with you at all, and I was figuring that you would still retain that mighty totem of an ass and still have it trailing behind you, even if that was the *only* thing. But you have come to me, you shape-shifter, you, no longer that beautiful and satisfying animal but a monkey!"

And right then and there she called to her slave boys and ordered that I be hoisted on high on their backs and carried out of her house. After I'd been heaved outside, there I was, outside her house, absolute and absolutely naked, crowned with my rose wreath and anointed with myrrh—I grabbed hold of the naked earth and slept with *that*.

Then, at daybreak, I start running—I was naked—down to the ship, and I tell my brother the whole of my

misfortune, for a laugh. And then, with a favorable wind blowing out of the city, we sail on from there and in a few days I come to my homeland. And there I made my sacrifices to the Savior Gods and there, at last, after such a long time—and, for all that, only with difficulty—I dedicated my dedications—saved and restored not, Zeus above!, from the dog who stuck his ass out, as the saying goes, but from the ass who stuck his nose in, back home again.



# Notes

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These notes are not a commentary—literary, philological, or historical—on *The Ass*. They are, rather, primarily a series of comparisons and contrasts designed to provide a curious reader food for thought on how *Onos* and *The Golden Ass* go about the business of rewriting their source text. I have divided the Greek text into eleven parts (only coincidentally the number of books/chapters in *The Golden Ass*), and have labeled those parts on my own initiative. That these labels are so different from the chapter titles that I created for *The Golden Ass* has much to do with the general absence of named female characters in *Onos*: Psyche, Charite, and Isis appear in five of my eleven Apuleian titles.

Each part below (except for Part 5, where immense differences require a different approach) begins with a general accounting of similarities (The Overlap) and differences (Key Divergences) between the part of *Onos* under discussion and the broader portion of *Golden Ass* to which it roughly corresponds. I have been clear in noting those portions of *Onos* where I believe significant reworking has occurred; as argued in the introductory essay, I believe that *Onos* fairly systematically removed portions from the Greek *Metamorphoseis* in which Lucius was not the main character. The rewriting is not an abridgement or epitome but a protest—an original fantasy involving a complex of interwoven tales leading to the author's transformation into a human being and redemption under the tutelage of a divinity has been reduced to bedroom farce because the Milesian medium, our author feels, is not sufficient to carry such weight. Apuleius felt otherwise.

## PART 1: INTRODUCTIONS IN HYPATA

### *Onos* 1–6 = *GA* 1.1–2.10

**The Overlap:** The narrator travels to Hypata in Thessaly, presents to Hipparchus the miser (Milo in *GA*) letters of introduction from one Decrianus of Patras (named Demeas in *GA*), and is invited to dinner. He meets Hipparchus's wife (unnamed; Pamphile in *GA*) and his slave girl Palaestra (called Photis in *GA*); Palaestra prepares his room. He spends his next day walking about Hypata with his eyes open for signs of witches and magic; he meets a friend of his mother, named Abroea (Byrrhaena in *GA*, where she calls herself Lucius's aunt, the sister of his mother, called Salvia). Abroea invites him to stay with her; he declines, but takes her advice not to get involved with Hipparchus's wife, a dangerous witch. Lucius then sets about seducing Palaestra, on the grounds that slaves know all about their masters, and he can learn about magic at a safe remove from the witch herself. He admires her physical charms as she cooks dinner; she warns him that if he wants what she's cooking, he'll get burned. They plan to meet in his room after she has settled master and mistress in bed.

**Key Divergences:** Apuleius takes much more time to cover this ground. His introduction (1.1, unparalleled in *Onos*) complicates the question of who is narrating the story, but also introduces the reader to a group of stories, all of which involve changes and restorations, an ensemble that he calls Milesian; but the story is also called Egyptian, and Greek, and has been adapted by a non-native Latin speaker. *Onos* offers no such complexity; it says nothing of its genre; it does not address the reader; it doesn't even start with, "I'm going to tell you a story." As mentioned in my opening essay, it seems that there was an introduction in the original *Metamorphoseis* that *Onos* has jettisoned.

Apuleius's narrator relates a long story (1.3–19) told by one of Lucius's fellow travelers on the way to Hypata

(part of the setup for Lucius's humiliation in the Festival of Laughter in Book 3) about the witch Meroë; he has Lucius go to a fish market to buy food that Hipparchus won't give him (1.24–25), where he meets friend Pytheas from his school days, now an inspector of the public food supply, who also gives Lucius a hard time. *GA* makes much of Milo's stinginess; Hipparchus in *Onos* turns out to be more liberal. *GA* also makes much of Pamphile's erotic desires; along with her name, these desires are of no importance in *Onos*. Byrrhaena in *GA* 2.3 talks more about Lucius's family, confirming his relationship to the philosopher Plutarch (*GA* 1.2); Byrrhaena's house is described, in particular the ominous statue of the death of Actaeon (*GA* 2.4). Lucius talks for a full page about the importance of hair for a woman's beauty (*GA* 2.8.2–2.10.1). One last point: the narrator's name is revealed to us at *Onos* 2 when Hipparchus talks to him; in *GA*, we learn it when his friend Pytheas addresses him in the fish market (1.25).

## SECTION ONE

(cf. *GA* 1.2, 1.21; 1.3–20, the tale of Aristomenes, is unparalleled)

In *Onos*, Lucius asks his fellow travelers where Hipparchus lives, and they point him in the right direction, and explain his miserly ways with his wife and single slave; in *GA*, the travelers leave and Lucius asks an innkeeper, an old woman who supplies the information.

**and a slave followed along, just one:** *GA* makes no mention of Lucius's slaves until *GA* 2.15.5 (plural); there are plural slaves at the end (*GA* 11.20.6), but only one at 2.31.4, 3.27.4, and 7.2.2. Apuleius is inconsistent.

**and we were sharing salt:** Sharing food and companionship.

**And after we completed that hard road in this fashion:** The travelers were doing something to pass the time in the Greek *Metamorphoseis*, perhaps telling stories; the

reworking has left “in this fashion” without a referent. Apuleius’s story of Socrates and Meroë is so tightly bound to the sequence of the first three books, culminating in the Festival of Laughter, that it is unlikely to be a guide to what was cut from the original Greek.

**He supports a single serving girl:** I should have said *slave girl*, more honest and in parallel with Lucius’s slave boys, but I kept the sanitized term to preserve parallels with *GA*. At *Onos* 54, however, the restored Lucius refers to Palaestra as “the slave of a Thessalian woman.” By the end of the sentence the narrative goes from indirect to direct speech; it looks sloppy, but could be vivid.

## SECTION TWO

(cf. *GA* 1.22–23)

Lucius at the door of his host is much the same in both texts. *GA* has a young woman answer the door (*adulescentula*), who talks of Milo’s terms of credit. The host’s (Hipparchus in *Onos*) protestations of poverty are parallel, but more exaggerated in *GA* (he speaks of his sparse furniture, and how the threat of robbers keeps him from having more; this anticipates the actual robbery in Book 3); in both, Lucius will grace the home by his presence; in both, the serving girl sees to preparing a bedroom, taking the baggage, and sending Lucius to the baths.

**I knock, and then a woman, slowly and grudgingly, but she did hear, and then she presented herself:** This mirrors the clumsy Greek syntax. The word for *woman* here is also the word for *wife*, and is then immediately used to label Hipparchus’s wife. *Onos* should have made it clear, as *GA* does (1.22.2, *adulescentula*), that it is a young woman who answers the door, who will turn out to be Palaestra, the maid of all work.

**Decrianus, the sophist from Patras:** Lucius’s patron is De-meas in *GA*, and is not called a sophist (that is, a professor

of rhetoric). Demeas has the ring of comedy and cliché about it, whereas Decrianus may have some more local or specific reference (Keulen, 386).

**does me a favor, he does:** Hipparchus's language here mirrors Lucius's words as he makes fun of Demeas at *GA* 1.21.8; the translation here hopes to suggest a similar fullness and irony. (I thank the outside reader for this suggestion.)

**you shall make it a great house:** The same point is made at *GA* 1.23.6, but more fancifully: "You shall make our house so much the greater by your rank and reputation; you shall also make yourself a praiseworthy paradigm if, satisfied with our humble hearth and home, you show yourself equal to the virtues of the great Theseus, your own father's namesake. He did not disdain the threadbare hospitality of the old woman Hecale."

### SECTION THREE

(cf. *GA* 1.24–26; 1.24.3–1.25.6, the adventure in the fish market, is unparalleled)

Palaestra speaks as she shows Lucius his bedchamber; Photis in *GA* does not. Here, Lucius goes to the baths and returns in one sentence; in *GA* 1.24.3–1.25.6 Lucius meets his school friend Pytheas in the fish market, and tries unsuccessfully to buy food for his dinner; he comes back to Hipparchus's empty dining room empty-handed, and goes to his room. At that point in *GA* Photis summons him to talk to Hipparchus, who asks at great length about his friend Demeas; Lucius goes to bed hungry, tired, and frustrated by his host, and so Book 1 ends (1.26). In *Onos*, on the other hand, Lucius gets a decent meal, good wine, pleasant conversation—in other words, is treated like a real guest (he stresses the point in his conversation with Abroea in Section 4).

**“I’m off to Larissa,” I said:** Nowhere in *GA* does Lucius give his plans. And, as we soon learn (at the beginning of Section 11), this is a lie.

## SECTION FOUR

(cf. *GA* 2.1.1–2.3.5; 2.5.2–8; 2.3.6–2.5.1, the description of the statue of Actaeon, is unparalleled)

Lucius reveals that he wants to see witches and the effects of witchcraft; the opening sentences are much like those of *GA* 2.1. But the whole of the section parallels *GA* 2.1–5 fairly closely: the desire for magic, meeting the aunt (here Abroea; Byrrhaena in *GA*), being invited to stay with her and declining in favor of his current host, being warned about the host’s wife who, as a witch, has a particular and destructive interest in young men. It is only in *GA* that Lucius’s physical appearance is described (2.2.8–9): “There’s the height, but not out of proportion; there’s the slimness, but not dry and desiccated; there’s the blushing complexion, but not to extremes. That head of hair—blond, natural, unaffected; those eyes—iron-grey, intent and alert, flashing to look at, all in all like an eagle’s; that mouth—the blossom and bloom of youth from any angle; the way he walks—poetry in motion, without pretense or posturing.” The most significant difference in this section is the description of the statue of Actaeon in Byrrhaena’s atrium, and the clear implication that Lucius, in desiring to see what he ought not, runs the risk of divine displeasure and death.

**a flying man, say, or a man being turned into stone:** Cf. *GA* 2.1.4: “I believed the stones that I was kicking were human once, but petrified; the birds that I was hearing had the same origin, but feathered.”

**I was walking around the city, without a clue where to start my search:** Cf. *GA* 2.2.1: “I kept on making the rounds everywhere, but found not even the first step or even a single trace of my heart’s desire.”

## SECTION FIVE

(cf. *GA* 2.6.1–2.7.2)

The two texts correspond fairly closely in structure. Rather than being scared off, Lucius is excited by the fact that he is staying under a witch's roof. He excuses himself and rushes back to his host's house, eager to do battle with and seduce the serving girl, whom he finds in the kitchen. In *GA*, as Lucius talks himself into wanting to seduce Photis, he makes reference to how she said good night to him the night before; neither text dramatizes that scene. In *Onos*, Lucius imagines grappling with Palaestra in wrestling terms (her name means, essentially, "wrestling mat"); in *GA*, the terms are more military.

## SECTION SIX

(cf. *GA* 2.7.3–7; 2.10; 2.8.2–2.10.1, the praise of Photis's hair, is unparalleled)

In both *Onos* and *GA*, Lucius finds Palaestra/Photis in the kitchen. He admires how she moves her hips as she stirs the pot; there are the same double entendres about the lucky man who gets to dip into her pot. In *Onos*, however, Palaestra speaks much more graphically about how her love is like burning and slaughtering; in *GA*, after the unparalleled and extensive praise of Photis's hair, the action is a little less violent, and there is a flurry of French kissing; both texts end with an arrangement to meet in Lucius's room after she settles the master and mistress into their beds.

**Because should you even touch it, burned with that fiery brand you'd be bound to my service, and no one, not even a god, would be enough to heal you, but only I, the one who burned you:** Cf. *GA* 2.7.7: "If you are singed by the flames in my furnace even in the first degree, you will roast deep down inside, and no one will put out that passion and that fire—no one but I."

**That made her burst out laughing—very loud and very lovely—and she was mine from then on:** Cf. *GA* 2.10.6, where the language is more violent: “Don’t panic; calm down. You see, because of the desires that we now share I surrender myself to you as your slave, and the passion that is ours shall be put off no longer: when the torches are first lit tonight I will be there at your bedroom. So go on and get yourself ready, because I am going to do battle with you valiantly, from the depths of my soul, all night long.”

## **PART 2: WRESTLING WITH PALAESTRA**

*Onos* 7–11.1 = *GA* 2.11–17

**The Overlap:** After a bath, dinner with his host precedes and delays Lucius’s assignation. Palaestra has prepared Lucius’s room: a mat has been placed outside for his slave boy; there is wine and water within, and roses are on the bed. An energetic sexual session ends on the note that it was repeated in subsequent nights. It is clear that, whatever reasons lay behind the desire to rework the Greek *Metamorphoseis*, it was not cleaned up or sanitized; in fact, it is *GA* that seems to have introduced some elements of restraint, in the description of action though not in visualization.

**Key Divergences:** For all of their similarities in starting point and ending point, the two texts are very different, and characterize Lucius and Palaestra/Photis differently. *GA* 2.11 is mostly unparalleled: Lucius’s receipt of a gift of food and wine from Byrrhaena; Lucius’s words to Photis about how these will give them strength and stamina for their lovemaking; and the beginning of dinner with Milo, highlighting Lucius’s fears about Pamphile, his longing for Photis, and Pamphile’s ability to predict rain by looking at the lamp. *GA* 2.12.1–2.15.3, the long story about

Diophanes the Chaldaean astrologer, also has no parallel in *Onos*. In *GA*, Lucius at Milo's table tells of the wonders of Diophanes, whom he knew in Corinth; Lucius is humiliated when Milo tells a story about how this quack was exposed. All of this delays the assignation with Photis. The episode serves to establish the gullibility of Lucius and his worthiness to be a sacrifice in the Festival of Laughter, the sequence of episodes that is Apuleius's plotting masterpiece; it also shows that Hypata, while a land of witches, is also on the lookout for frauds. Lucius escapes from that scene to his room, where he waits for Photis. It is in general clearer in *GA* than in *Onos* that the purpose of the scene is to show that sex is only one of the tools by which the gullible Lucius falls into the clutches of the townspeople of Hypata and their plans.

In *GA*, the language of sexual intercourse is primarily military, and Photis demands that Lucius do battle with her and fight to the death; in *Onos*, the language is entirely that of wrestling, with Palaestra calling out orders for grips and snatches for her pupil to follow. Consequently, the extensive sex scene in *Onos* 9–10 is totally different from the brief scene in *GA* 2.17.4–5. The sex scene in *Onos* is not quite graphic, but is quite suggestive, when it is not ridiculous, and the double entendres are hardly double. The simpler scene in *GA* is preceded by more graphic detail, with Lucius exposing his erection and begging for mercy and relief (2.16.4–6), Photis at first shading her genitals with her hand out of modesty (2.17.1), then straddling him (2.17.4: “she gave me the full enjoyment of the fruit of the bareback-riding Venus”).

## SECTION SEVEN

(cf. *GA* 2.11.4, 2.15.4–6)

Some small differences are worth noting: in *GA*, Byrrhaena has sent food to Lucius, while Palaestra in *Onos* sets out the leftovers from Milo's dinner for them to share; in *GA*, Photis brings the roses with her when she comes to Lucius,

while in *Onos*, Palaestra has already arrayed the bed with roses; Lucius in *Onos* is waiting for his fellow symposiast, while Lucius in *GA* is anticipating gladiatorial combat.

**and we enjoyed each other's company:** Given that this clause corresponds to a long and well-developed scene in *GA*, it may suggest that the Greek *Metamorphoseis* contained some sort of story told over post-dinner drinking, just as was indicated at *Onos* 3: "And after we had dined there was drinking, and the usual sort of conversation for dinner with a guest."

**Then I made up a story:** Lucius is not very trustworthy. He has already lied about his plans to travel to Larissa (the very beginning of Section 4); at the end of *Onos*, when he has regained his shape, he needs to convince the governor "to arrest me and keep me under guard until such time as I could persuade him that I wasn't making up a story as to how I came to be this way" (54). This sort of untrustworthiness is hinted at in *GA* 2.12.5, when Lucius tells his hosts what predictions Diophanes made about him: "He said that, on the one hand, my glory would blossom like the flowers in spring; on the other, that I myself should become a long story, a fiction beyond belief, a book in many chapters."

## SECTIONS EIGHT AND NINE

(cf. *GA* 2.16.1–2.17.3)

**the two of us drinking each other's health—toasts of wine and kisses. And then, when we had, courtesy of the wine, gotten ourselves good and ready for the night:** These opening details resemble the closing details in Apuleius's scene; see below on *Onos* 11.

**onto a real wrestling floor:** The name Palaestra means "wrestling floor"; it is common to print the text with a capital letter here, approximately, "a *real* Palaestra."

**And she took off her clothes and stood there, completely naked. Then she began to give orders:** *GA* 1.17.1–3: “She lets all her clothes fall away and stands there naked; she lets her hair tumble down. It is a beautiful metamorphosis, in light-hearted lasciviousness, into the very image of Venus as she comes up out of the waves of the sea. It was more with an intentional desire to shade it than with an embarrassed desire to hide it that she briefly covered her smooth-shaved pubic mound with her rosy hand. ‘Come and fight!’ she said. ‘And fight for all you’re worth!’”

It is important to realize that the sex described is not to be imagined as occurring in real time. The actions require more time than it takes for the reader to read them, of course, but the narrator does not provide much indication that there were gaps in the action, or that certain actions took a certain length of time. The reader has to imagine the passage of time; otherwise, the staccato string of instructions is merely ludicrous. *GA* is much better at this.

**lay me out, flat on my back:** Palaestra’s language is inconsistent here and in the following section in the grammatical gender she assigns to herself: “your opponent” is a masculine noun; “flat on my back” uses a feminine adjective. Primarily, she uses the language of a male coach instructing a male wrestler in contest with a male. It’s not that she is describing herself as male, but that her instructions are occasionally generic; that is, “Now you’ve got him,” *not* “Now you’ve got her” or “Now you’ve got me.”

## SECTION TEN

There are no real parallels to *GA* here, neither in the sexual descriptions nor in the conclusion, where Lucius gives orders to Palaestra: “Get up. Sit down. Pour water over my hands, rub the rest of me, and towel me off.”

## SECTION ELEVEN: First Sentence

(*Onos* 11.1; cf. *GA* 2.17.4–5)

Here is how Apuleius ends the scene: “Finally, both of us wearied, exhausted, our strength spent, our arms and legs no longer capable, we collapsed together, each locked in the other’s embrace, panting and out of breath. We would, from time to time, with a glass of wine, revivify ourselves from our fatigue, spur ourselves on to intercourse, and reinvigorate our desires anew. And so we carried on, sleeping not a wink, in wrestling matches such as these, all the way to the brink of dawn. Upon the foundation of this night we constructed for ourselves quite a few others just like it.”

**I completely forgot all about my trip to Larissa:** He means the trip he was fibbing about at the end of Section 3.

## PART 3: A MISTAKEN METAMORPHOSIS

*Onos* 11.2–15 = *GA* 3.19.1–3.27.6

**The Overlap:** Now Photis/Palaestra is seen not as slave girl and maid but as a witch’s assistant. Lucius begs her as such to allow him to see the witch when she is transforming herself; he says the assistant must herself be skilled in these arts, because she has bewitched him, despite his resistance to women before. She says that she does not know the arts of magic herself but will grant him access; then they go to bed. She arranges for Lucius to watch while the witch transforms herself into an owl; she does this by smearing herself with an ointment kept in a jar in a cabinet. The witch then flies away and Lucius begs Photis/Palaestra to allow him to cover himself in the ointment so that he too may become a bird. She gets the ointment from the wrong jar and when he smears himself with it he turns into an ass. Photis/Palaestra tells him that she made

a mistake but that this mistake is easily corrected because he only needs to eat some roses, which she will provide for him in the morning. In the meantime he goes to the stable and is treated badly both by his own horse and by the ass that belongs to his host.

**Key Divergences:** *GA* 2.18.1–3.19.2, the entire Festival of Laughter sequence (dinner at Byrrhaena's, the tale of Thelyphron, Lucius's arrest and trial, Photis's explanation concerning the goatskins and her own confession) has no parallel. In *GA*, Photis grants Lucius access to the witch during her transformation as a way to repay him for her part in his humiliations in the Festival of Laughter; in *Onos*, Palaestra yields to Lucius's begging as a favor. The Greek story adds two important sophistications: Palaestra says that love cannot be compelled by magic, and Lucius says that he wants to be transformed because he is curious to find out whether he will keep his human intelligence while inside of a bird's body. When Lucius is confined in the stall for the night, he has a worse time in the Latin story, because there are roses there that he cannot quite eat, and there is a sadistic slave boy (his own slave, as is stressed [*GA* 3.27.4]; on the other hand, he does not betray Lucius when tortured at *GA* 7.2.2) who beats him with a cudgel until interrupted by the arrival of the housebreakers (3.27.5–7).

## SECTION ELEVEN: Conclusion

(cf. *GA* 3.19–20)

**Mr. Straightarrow . . . ensorceling my soul through erotic combat:** *GA* 3.19.5: "although I have always been otherwise a man who disdains the embraces of women, married and not, you have me in your clutches, condemned and doomed, just like a slave, willingly surrendered." Note that here *Onos* speaks of the lovemaking of Lucius and Palaestra in military, not the expected wrestling, language. "Straightarrow" translates the adjective that gives

us *adamantine*, but the connotation here is not hardness but inflexibility.

**What spell can charm Love by magic?:** While there is no such sentiment expressed in the Latin text, both agree that the love of Lucius for the slave girl is like magic and has resulted in a transformation from one who despises love to one who is under the spell of love.

**I don't even know how to read:** Photis in *GA* makes no such admission. If Palaestra is telling the truth, there are interesting implications; see ní Mheallaigh, 137: "Each little pot or pyxis evidently contains an unguent which can transform one into a variety of different animals, and so each jar contains within itself a different plot or story-line. To distinguish one from the other requires the ability to read, which Palaestra the slave-girl lacks." I would argue that Photis in *GA* knowingly gives Lucius the wrong potion, continuing the humiliations of the Festival of Laughter (her tearful explanation concerning the barber and the goat hairs at 3.14–18 is patently false); then *Onos* would seem in contrast to make Palaestra a true innocent. But if, as Dollins argues, Lucius's journey in *Onos* is constantly directed and redirected by women, a knowing/mischievous Palaestra would be a better agent.

**And at that point, on those terms and conditions, we went to bed:** Cf. *GA* 3.20.4: "We throw all our clothes to the floor and then, at last, absolutely naked and exposed, we offer up an orgy in honor of Venus; but then, as a matter of fact, when I was exhausted, Photis, as an act of her own Bacchic generosity, gave me the gift that the young boys give."

## SECTION TWELVE

(cf. *GA* 3.21)

**where they were sleeping:** *Onos* is perhaps confused, having the witch perform her magic in her bedroom in the presence of her husband; in *GA* 3.21.3, Pamphile goes to

“that upper room” (*cubiculum*, literally “bedchamber,” but in reference to her solitary workshop as described at GA 3.17.3, up on the roof and exposed to the winds).

**a narrow little chink in the door:** There is a chink in the door at GA 3.21.3; such a chink already figured in the story of Thelyphron (GA 2.30.5). In *Onos*, this voyeuristic device reappears at 47 (the brothers watching Lucius eat human food) and 52 (Meneclēs watching Lucius and the woman in bed).

**She takes some of this and then smears herself all over:** The parallel in GA 3.21.4–6 is instructive: “Then, after she mutters secret words at length to her lamp, she makes her body quiver in spasmodic jolts. Her limbs then lightly waver and sway, and from them first to flash forth is the soft down; then grow the shafted feathers; her nose, now hooked, hardens into a beak; her nails contract into barbed talons. Pamphile turns into a horned owl! She lets loose a hissing screech.”

**She was a long-eared owl:** What kind of bird? κόραξ νυκτερινός, literally “night raven,” specified in modern nomenclature as the genus of night herons (*nyctikorax*). GA has quite simply *bubo*, “owl.” Like Sullivan, I follow the note in Macleod’s Loeb, and translate as “long-eared owl,” which is what Aristotle understands by κόραξ νυκτερινός; cf. *Historia Animalium* 592b8.

**through the window:** Literally, through the door, but Lucius is standing at the door. Pamphile’s workshop is described at GA 3.17 as a sort of rooftop patio, open to all the winds; at 3.21.6, “she raises herself aloft into the abyss of the air.”

## SECTION THIRTEEN

(cf. GA 3.22.1–3.25.1)

There is nothing in *Onos* that is parallel to a long passage in GA (3.22.4–3.23.5) in which Photis asks Lucius how she

could trust that he would return to her if he were a bird. He promises his fidelity and also asks about the cure that would return him to his old self. And we learn that the antidote for the bird transformation is dill and bay leaves dipped in spring water.

**I wanted to learn by experience:** Whitmarsh draws attention to this passage and argues that the Greek story shows a more sophisticated interest in the narrator in the question of human and animal consciousness. In *GA*, Lucius only wants to learn about magic; in *Onos*, “the Greek Lucius is engaged in an empirical . . . experiment in the nature of identity” (Whitmarsh, 136). But note that Lucius is particular: Would he retain his human identity if he were a *bird*? He will ultimately have to conduct his experiment on a lower level, literally and metaphorically, as an ass; at *Onos* 27, he wishes he had been turned into a dog.

**a tail came out of me from the rear:** *GA* 3.24.3–5 is much fuller, and nicely illustrates the ways in which Apuleius ornaments and embellishes his source text: “I instantly made impatient gestures and flapped both my arms, now one, now the other, as if I were already such a bird. But there is no down, and there are no feathers anywhere, but my own hairs, of course, grow coarse and gross into bristles; my soft, tender skin hardens into a hide; and at the very ends of the palms of my hands and the soles of my feet all my digits together, no longer discrete or five in number, coalesce into hooves, one by one. From the base of my spine a fully-developed tail comes out of hiding and into the light. Now my face grows hideously lengthwise, my mouth grows breadthwise, my nostrils gape outward, my lips hang downward; not only that, but my ears are covered in upstanding bristles of the most appalling growth.”

**a human voice for blaming Palaestra—that I didn’t have any longer:** Both texts emphasize that the ass’s lack of a human voice makes meaningful complaint difficult. Only the Latin text mentions Lucius’s satisfaction in the size of his new penis; as this is the characteristic and the

embarrassment of the ass, the lack of this detail in the Greek text suggests that, here at least, its concerns are more with mind than body.

## SECTION FOURTEEN

(cf. GA 3.25.2–4)

The Latin text is much the same: regret, explanation, and the promise of a simple cure that will arrive at dawn (GA 3.25.2–3): “And just as soon as she saw me looking like this, she slapped her own face with furious hands. ‘I’m finished, fool that I am!’ she said. ‘My fearfulness and my headlong hurry have simultaneously tripped me up; the uniformity of the jars has tricked me. But no need to panic; the restorative cure for this metamorphosis is simpler. You see, you have only to bite at roses in bloom to abandon the ass and be instantly restored to my rightful Lucius.’” In GA 3.25.4, Photis adds that she wishes she’d brought rose wreaths with her. In the Greek text there is no reason not to take Palaestra at her word; in the Latin text, however, given the events of the Festival of Laughter, it is very likely that Photis has embarrassed Lucius here on purpose: just another prank played at Lucius’s expense. Her long and tearful confession about the goat hairs that she collected in place of those of the Boeotian boy (GA 3.15–18) must have been false, because Lucius’s humiliations in the festival were carefully planned. On the other hand, because some days elapse between her promise to show Lucius Pamphile’s metamorphosis and the actual event (GA 3.21.1), Photis could have had a change of heart, the Festival of Laughter forgotten.

**the one that makes the feathers sprout:** Van Thiel’s text means “the one that smears the feathers”; the verb *smears* may in fact be an error in the original reworking of the story. Later manuscripts and modern editions print a word that means “causes to sprout.”

## SECTION FIFTEEN

(cf. *GA* 3.26.1–3.27.6)

In general, Lucius in *GA* is animated by outrage, frustrated in his attempts to eat (there are no roses in the stable in *Onos*); Lucius in *Onos* distances himself somewhat from his predicament, and tries to laugh at it.

**in my mind and my intelligence I was a human being, that old Lucius, except for my voice:** Whitmarsh notes that here speech is thought of as a sort of interface between mind and body, “the physical manifestation of mental processes” (Whitmarsh, 137). Lucius wants speech to belong to his rational nature, but it does not respond. He will fail twice more in attempts to speak at *Onos* 16 and 38.

**I blamed Palaestra over and over for her mistake:** In *GA* 3.26.1–2, Lucius thinks more violent thoughts: “But I—although I was a four-square ass, a beast of burden and Lucius no more, I kept within me all the same my human sensibility. Here’s the proof: deeply and deliberately did I debate within myself whether I ought to kill this woman.” What stops Lucius in *GA* is the thought that a dead Photis could not bring him help in the morning. If Palaestra in *Onos* did make an honest mistake, then what we have here is a sorcerer’s apprentice story (for which see Ogden, 231–70, especially 245–46).

**they laid their ears back and were ready to fight for their bellies by means of their hooves:** In *GA* 3.26.6–8, the horse and the ass actually do attack Lucius.

**tried to laugh, though my laughter was braying:** Lucius in the Latin story does not laugh at this point, perhaps because he has been humiliated so badly in the Festival of Laughter.

**This sticking my nose in!:** The Greek *περιεργία* is here rendered by the same translation as for the key term *curiositas* in Latin. Lucius’s worry that, as an animal, he might be attacked by a wolf has nothing to do with his mistreatment

by his slave boy or his stablemates; it does anticipate his fear of being eaten in the amphitheater at *Onos* 53; cf. *GA* 10.34.5.

**fool that I was:** This translates the Greek *δυστυχής* as it translated the Latin “miser”; so also at *Onos* 13. When Palaestra says, “Fool that I am” at *Onos* 14, the Greek is a slightly different word for “wretched”: *τάλαινα*.

## PART 4: IN THE SERVICE OF BANDITS

### *Onos* 16–21 = *GA* 3.27.7–4.22.7

**The Overlap:** Robbers arrive and empty the house, piling their loot on Milo’s/Hipparchus’s ass, Lucius’s horse, and Lucius himself, now an ass and beast of burden. The characters from Hypata cease to be a part of the plot (though at *GA* 7.1–3 robbers speak of how Lucius is suspected as being behind the robbery at Milo’s house). They begin their march to the robbers’ hideout. Lucius tries to appeal to Caesar but only brays. They reach a friendly farmhouse; Lucius forages in the vegetable plots of a gardener, who attacks him; Lucius fights back. On the next leg of the journey, Lucius intends to refuse to move, hoping to be abandoned; the other ass tries just this, and is slaughtered and pitched over a cliff. At the hideout, the old woman who is the robbers’ slave has a meal prepared for them; other robbers arrive, and they have a feast. Lucius finds a way to steal human bread in preference to raw barley.

**Key Divergences:** Only *Onos* mentions that Hipparchus, Palaestra, and his own slave boy are tied up. The robbers dig through the walls in *Onos*; in *GA*, they break down doors. The most important differences involve the robbers at their hideout: it is a cave in the mountains in *GA*, but in *Onos*, it is only a homestead; the old woman is verbally abused in *GA*; the lengthy stories told by the second group

of robbers at *GA* 4.8.6–4.21.7, about Lamachus, Alcimus, and Thrasyleon, are nowhere to be seen in *Onos*, and it was likely that similar stories, present in *Metamorphoseis*, were omitted as being irrelevant to the story of Lucius himself. *Onos* does note, however, that there were stories told at the robbers' banquet.

## SECTION SIXTEEN

(cf. *GA* 3.27.7–3.29.8)

Although in outline the two stories reach the same conclusion from the same starting point (robbers break in, steal the treasure from the house, load it onto the animals, and lead them away), there are a number of interesting divergences in detail: the robbers dig through the walls in the Greek version, while in the Latin they break down the doors; Milo's household is said to be tied up only in the Greek version (of course the witch, now a bird, is nowhere to be seen); *GA* has considerable detail concerning the treasure chamber that was in the middle of Milo's house and how the robbers had to smash it open. The robbers leave someone behind to monitor any investigation of the crime (*GA* 3.28.6).

Roses are more important in *GA*: the ass almost ate roses dedicated to the goddess Epona while in the stable (*GA* 3.27.1–3), and now thinks about eating roses along his route.

**And time and again I longed to cry out, "O Caesar," but then I did nothing but bray—the "O" I kept calling out loud and most articulate, but the "Caesar" would not come:** Lucius in *GA* 3.29.2–4 tells the same story, but there he tries to cry out the name of Caesar in the presence of villagers in a hamlet that they are passing through.

**I decided it was best to go forward in silence:** In *GA* 3.29.5–8 the ass also reaches this conclusion but only after another episode in which he sees roses and believes he could eat them and recover his shape. He decides not to eat

them because he is afraid of the consequences of untimely metamorphosis: “if the ass’s skin were to fall away and I were to appear once more as Lucius, I did not want to find myself face to face with definite death and destruction in the midst of gangs of robbers, either through their suspicion of my art of magic or through their apprehension of my bringing criminal charges in the future.” The former of these fears is on Lucius’s mind at the end of *Onos*, when he regains his shape in the amphitheater (54).

## SECTION SEVENTEEN

(cf. GA 4.1–2)

Both texts have the same elements: reaching the farmhouse, being unloaded, and being allowed to forage; eating raw vegetables; seeing roses at a distance but then realizing on inspection that they are poisonous laurel-roses.

**I had never eaten raw barley:** At this point in *GA*, Lucius only says he had not foraged before; his unfamiliarity with raw barley is mentioned much later (4.22.3–4).

**but those roses were not real roses:** *GA* 4.2.7–8: “These shrubs, profusely covered in leaves, after the fashion of the laurel, produce little blossoms opened wide, modestly crimson in color, in the manner of the true, the scented flower, but these blossoms have no scent at all. Common and uneducated folk call them laurel-roses in the countryside vernacular; food from such roses is fatal to any domesticated animal.”

## SECTION EIGHTEEN

(cf. GA 4.3)

In both texts, the gardener beats the ass, but the ass kicks at him and knocks him down. He is chased by dogs (more than a match for bears) and retreats to the farmhouse; the dogs are called off and he is beaten until an explosive bout

of diarrhea makes the men lose interest. In *GA* 4.3.5–6, the farmer’s wife cries out and this brings villagers to help; *Onos* has no wife and no villagers, just men who assist the gardener, probably other workers at the farmhouse.

**Then, like some petty tyrant, Mr. Death to All Evildoers:** ὥσπερ τις δυνάστης μισοπόνηρος: a detail not in the Latin. Note that the gardener does not have a name in either text.

**Now these dogs were many and huge and a match for bears in battle. I realized that they would tear me apart if they caught me. I soon doubled back and determined to follow the proverb, “Better to run back home than to run into trouble.” I was escaping, but backward, and I went again to the farmhouse:** Cf. *GA* 4.3.7–8: “because I see that the dogs called on me were huge in size, many in number, more than a match for bears and lions in battle, and had whetted their appetites, I extemporize and make a new plan: I stop making my getaway and beat a retreat at a quick clip back again into the stable where we had turned off the road.” Note the lack of the proverb in the Latin text, and the corresponding increased interest in the Greek text in Lucius learning lessons (*Onos* 16, 18, 20, 22, 42) and in proverbial wisdom in general (*Onos* 18, 42, 45, 56).

## SECTION NINETEEN

(cf. *GA* 4.4.1–4.5.4)

While the Latin text alone makes it clear that the journey onward from the farmhouse begins that very afternoon, the two texts are otherwise very similar in their details: the ass gets an exceptionally large burden to carry; he finds it extremely difficult and resolves to go no farther; he creates a plan to drop dead on the road and he expects the robbers to leave him to die and to take his burdens and put them on the other pack animals. The other ass, however, has the same plan: he drops down and the robbers cut him up and toss him over a cliff. Each text mentions only a single sword.

**and they push it, still gasping, over the cliff's edge, and so it disappeared down below, dancing the dance of death:** Cf. *GA* 4.5.4: "They drag him a little ways off the road and throw him down off a most commanding cliff, still breathing, headlong into the neighboring valley."

## SECTION TWENTY

(cf. *GA* 4.5.5–4.7.5)

In outline, the two texts are quite similar here: Lucius learns his lesson and decides to soldier on; the robbers get to their cave (in *GA*; in *Onos*, only a homestead, τὰ οἰκεῖα), where they meet the old woman who cooks for them; the robbers bathe and prepare to eat. *GA* adds the obvious detail that Lucius is tied up before they enter; *GA* 4.6, a lengthy excursus/ekphrasis on the rocky/mountainous setting of the robbers' cave, has no parallel. Further the robbers insult the old woman at length when they first enter their cave (*GA* 4.7.2–3). They begin: "What? Still at it? The last corpse in line at the pyre, the foremost disgrace to the world of the living and the only one who disgusts Orcus and the Land of the Dead—is this how you play with us, sitting on your hunkers at home, workshy and shiftless? Have you no consolation to offer us after all our awful and life-threatening labors?"

**my fellow traveler:** Cf. *GA* 4.5.5, "my comrade-in-arms": the military term carries with it the connotation of "on the march."

**what was at my feet:** τὰ ἐν ποσὶ, a proverbial phrase that means "the world as you find it"; it has a more specific reference to the fate of the ass that was just killed in the road.

**and that they would therefore be stopping at the place where they were staying:** This follows van Thiel's text, where the word λοιπὸν means "consequently" not "remaining" (as in Section 21).

## SECTION TWENTY-ONE

(cf. *GA* 4.8.1–5 [first paragraph] and 4.22.1–4 [second paragraph]; the intervening portion, the extensive tales of the robbers [*GA* 4.8.6–4.21.7], has no parallel in *Onos*)

**there was a lavish lunch and much storytelling in this symposium of manslayers:** It is reasonable to presume that there were stories told by the robbers in the original *Metamorphoseis* and that they have been edited out in the interest of concentrating the reader's attention solely on Lucius. It would also be likely that these stories concern the recent adventures of these robbers, although such stories could not be reconstructed from the tales that Apuleius has his robbers tell. Note that later in *Onos* (22), the robbers suggest that killing the ass would be atonement for their army, allowing us to infer that we heard of the deaths of many in their band, as in Apuleius's robbers' stories.

**The old woman put out some barley for me and the horse, and he gulped down that barley with alacrity, being apprehensive of me, his lunch partner. This was reasonable. But whenever I saw the old woman going out I would eat the bread of the men who were inside:** *GA* 4.22.3–4: "But I—I had never dined on raw barley before, but had always had it ground fine and boiled long and made into porridge. Careful investigation revealed to me the corner where the loaves of bread that were left over from the assembled army were piled in a heap, and there with energetic enthusiasm I exercise my jaws, in agony from their long fasting, full only of cobwebs."

**the young man was big, and his gaze was terrifying, and he was always carrying his sword, and he always kept the door shut:** Remarkably, there has been no mention of a cave per se in the Greek story, only a homestead with a door. When the old woman goes out of the cave in *GA*, the ass can go in. The young man is posted as a sentry, outside where the ass is, and guards the door. There is no such sentry in *GA*.

## PART 5: ENTER THE MAIDEN

*Onos* 22–26 = GA 4.23–27; 6.25–7.13

**General Observation:** It is very tempting to view this portion of *Onos* as a simple condensation of GA: there is so much less of it. The maiden is brought in; the old woman is told to console her; the robbers have another raid; the ass tries to escape when he hears how they plan to kill him; the maiden sees her chance and escapes with the ass; the robbers apprehend them and make an elaborate plan to kill both the maiden and the ass; soldiers appear and arrest the robbers; the maiden's fiancé is said to be the one who betrayed the robbers' hideout; there is a procession to the maiden's village. There is nothing in *Onos* that corresponds to the exchanges between the two women in which the tale of the abduction is told (GA 4.24–27); the *Cupid and Psyche* story (GA 4.28–6.24), told by the old woman to calm the fears of the captive maiden (Charite in Apuleius, first named at 7.12.2; unnamed in *Onos*), has no parallel in *Onos*; the elaborate scene in which the fiancé Tlepolemus gains the robbers' trust and works to betray them and free the maiden (GA 7.4–12) is a mere sentence in *Onos*; similarly, there will later be nothing in *Onos* that corresponds to the tale of Charite, Tlepolemus, and Thrasyllus (8.1.3–8.14.5). The basic operative principle of *Onos*, removing all that is not directly relevant to Lucius's story, produces a particularly unsatisfactory result as regards this maiden (see the opening sentence of Section 34), and as the original Greek must have said something there of how Charite and her husband met their end in fuller detail, it is likely that we learned more of them earlier on in the Greek as well. On the other hand, *Cupid and Psyche* must represent some sort of baroque improvisation on Apuleius's part. Both *Onos* and GA represent variations on the themes of *Metamorphoseis*. *Cupid and Psyche* has value as a counterpoint to Lucius's narrative, an expansion that is at home in a complex text in which stories with different narrators

and different audiences shine light on each other; Lucius's story in *Onos* is a ruthless paring down of many stories to one story. Thus the two, *Onos* and *Cupid and Psyche*, make a surprising pair, of comparable length and concentration, each a different take on what is the core story of *Metamorphoseis*, each its own fairy tale of transition from youth to adulthood.

For this part of the story, the strict parallelism of overlaps and divergences is not maintained; similarities and differences are handled here on a section-by-section basis.

## SECTION TWENTY-TWO

(cf. *GA* 4.23–27; 6.25.1–6.26.3)

**The Overlap:** In both versions, the ass stays behind at the robber's hideout while the robbers leave on a raiding expedition and come back with a maiden: well-born, well-dressed, beautiful, in mourning and in tears, her clothes and hair torn. The ass stands by sympathetically as the maiden refuses consolation. There is a second expedition, and the ass is needed to carry back captured loot; he is beaten constantly, both on the outward and the return trip; he is hobbled by his injuries; the robbers contemplate killing him, a cripple not worth feeding, by throwing him off a cliff; fear of death makes the ass hurry on back to the hideout despite his injuries.

**Key Divergences:** This page of Greek text corresponds to nearly fifty-four Latin pages in *The Golden Ass*. The key difference is that in Apuleius the old woman tells the maiden the tale of *Cupid and Psyche* (4.28–6.24, which is forty-nine pages on its own), but there are other differences as well, some of which indicate how the original text was pared down to create *Onos*. At the end of *Onos* 21, the ass was left under guard; at the end of *GA* 4.22, all of the robbers leave, and the ass is alone with the old woman. In *Onos*, the robbers return three days later; in *GA* 4.23.1–3, the robbers return at daybreak while the ass has gone on his own

to a stream to drink (and to relieve himself?) after eating his third basket of bread. Apuleius has not thought out the times: the robbers leave in the night and return at dawn—this could only mean that this was a carefully planned raid executed on a daring timetable; in *Onos*, it appears that, despite three days' work, they have only one prize to show for it. This contrast is made clear in Apuleius, given the expansive robbers' stories of *GA* 4.8–21. What hides behind that detail, “three days later”?

In *Onos*, the hideout is never called a cave, though it is in the mountains, and there is an entryway to the inner portions of it. In *GA*, the robbers explain that they are poor and are only holding the maiden for ransom (ransom is not mentioned in *Onos*); in both stories the maiden is not calmed down at first. *GA* gives the old woman a large speaking part, not only in telling *Cupid and Psyche*, but in engaging the maiden in conversation, in which we learn about her background, her impending wedding (she was abducted on her wedding day), and her bad dream; *Cupid and Psyche* is supposed to illustrate how such things turn out for the best. The ass stands by sympathetically right after the maiden is introduced in *Onos*; in *GA* 6.25.1, he stands by after *Cupid and Psyche* is told, wishing he had notebooks to write it down.

There is then another raiding expedition, motivated in the Greek, abrupt in the Latin. In *Onos* 22.4–7, at dawn one of the guards who watch the roads comes to say that a rich man is coming. Everyone suits up and heads out; the ass is reluctant, fearing the fighting will cost him his life; they kill the man and his slaves, pack up his treasure, and head back, hiding the rest of the man's baggage in the woods. In *GA* 6.25.2–5, other robbers come back (who?), bloody but victorious, with their arms full; the unwounded ones go off to get the rest of the loot that they had stashed in a cave. Both in *Onos* and *GA*, they beat the ass all the way there and turn around immediately, and he has a hard time of it; the ass stumbles in *GA*, but merely hurts his leg in *Onos*.

**falling down forever and again:** The adverbial πάντα is also above, where the maiden is weeping “for everything that had happened.”

**a bird of ill omen/an atonement for our army:** For *atonement*, van Thiel ad loc. points to a parallel notion in Achilles Tatius’s romance, *The Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon* (3.12.1); our robbers want to propitiate some god (most likely Mars) to restore their luck. In *GA* 6.26.1, the sentiment is more clearly expressed: “And what of the fact that he came to our hideout left foot first? From that ill-omened moment on we have taken no proper profit at all, only blood and trauma and the slaughterings of our bravest men.” It is hard not to suspect that there were more robbers’ stories in the Greek original to justify this sentiment.

## SECTION TWENTY-THREE

(cf. *GA* 6.26.4–6.29.5)

**The Overlap:** The two texts are reasonably similar and parallel: the robbers, along with their wounded comrades who had been left behind before, now leave the ass behind and take only the horse to go off yet again to get the remainder of the loot from the man they had ambushed earlier. In a soliloquy, the ass realizes that he needs to be bold in order to avoid death; he gallops off (in *GA*, he snaps his tether; in *Onos*, he realizes that he hasn’t been tethered); the old woman tries to stop him, grabs onto his tail, and is dragged along (compared to Dirce in both stories), even though he has kicked her (in *GA*, not in *Onos*); the maiden comes out, realizes her chance, and gets on the ass’s back; she talks to the ass and promises him rich rewards if he can get her safe to her father’s house. *GA* tells the story in richer detail; most important is the maiden’s lengthy soliloquy, in which she promises that the ass will be the subject of a painting to be put in the atrium of her house; she speaks of her rescue in mythical terms, and even wonders out loud if there is a human face lurking inside of the ass that saves

her. It's worth quoting in full (GA 6.29.2–5): “You see, I will set my seal upon the memory of my present good fortune and of divine Providence herself in a testament that will last forever: I will dedicate in the atrium of my house a representation of my present getaway, painted on a proper board. A simple story, but it shall be seen; it shall be retold in travelers’ tales; it shall endure forever on the pens of learned authors: *The Princess Bride Escaping from Bondage on the Back of an Ass*. And you yourself will join the lists of the wonders of ancient days, and we will all believe by the example of your honest truth that Phrixus *did* swim the Hellespont on the back of a ram, that Arion *was* a dolphin’s charioteer, that Europa *did* lie on the back of a bull. And if it is true that Jupiter bellowed like a bull, then it could be that in the ass that saved me there lies lurking a human face, or even the visage of a god!”

**I said that my being captured by an old woman made me well worthy of the cliff:** “I said” is a curious slip. At GA 6.27.2, Lucius remembers (*memor*) the threats of the robbers when he resolves to run on with the old woman dragging behind him.

**she let out a yell to rouse the maiden:** This is surprising. Why would the woman think that the maiden would come to her aid? GA makes it clear that the maiden is merely aroused by the commotion.

**She came forward, saw that the old Dirce had latched herself onto the ass, and she dares a noble daring, one worthy of a daredevil man:** GA 6.27.5: “She comes running out at the invitation of her voice [*vocis excitu procurrens*] and sees, by Hercules, a spectacle, a Theban tragic scene of noteworthy novelty: an aged Dirce dragging not behind a bull but an ass. The girl takes on the unflinching bravery of a man and dares a deed that was very pretty indeed.” In Theban mythology, the twins Amphion and Zethus take vengeance on Dirce, the woman who had mistreated their mother, Antiope, by tying Dirce to the tail of a bull, who then dragged her to her death.

**I will set you free from all work, and there will be a bushel of barley for you each and every day for breakfast:** At GA 6.28.4–6, the maiden also promises to make Lucius beautiful: “How great will be the thanks I’ll render, how great will be the honors I’ll offer, how great will be the food I’ll set before you! And first of all I’ll dress this mane of yours: I’ll decorate it right and proper with the jewelry of my maidenhood; your forelock I’ll curl first and then I’ll part it prettily; the rough hairs of your tail, tangled and matted through long disregard of daily bathing, I’ll restore to their proper luster, curried and combed out with care. You will shine like the stars of the night sky, studded with chains and medallions, in abundance and made of gold; you will march in triumph to the rejoicing of the people who will parade alongside you; and I will stuff you full every day with the nuts and yet more delicate treats that I will carry in the folds of my silken gown—you, my savior.”

## SECTION TWENTY-FOUR

(cf. GA 6.29.6–6.30.7)

When they apprehend the ass and the maiden, the robbers speak in much the same way in the two texts: in both, they ask if she is afraid of ghosts; they offer to be the ones to get her back to her parents.

**the road divided three ways:** At GA 6.29.6–8, the ass and the maiden fight over which way to go; she wants to go where the ass knows the robbers have gone and he digs in his heels. *Onos* makes nothing of this crossroads. In both, the pair are apprehended by the robbers at this point.

**and say . . . they said through their cruel laughter:** Another clumsiness: the same direct quotation is introduced twice.

**Now you’re limping when you were caught while galloping away? But when you decided to run away, you were**

**healthy, swifter than a horse—you had wings!:** GA 6.30.5: “Those rotten feet of yours—they know how to run away but they don’t know how to walk? And just a short time before now the speed of wingèd Pegasus was no match for you!”

**we found the old woman hanging by a rope from a crag:** In GA 6.30.6–7, she hangs from a cypress tree; the robbers throw her over a cliff both here and in GA.

## SECTION TWENTY-FIVE

(cf. GA 6.31.1–6.32.2)

It is remarkable that the form of death agreed upon in *Onos* parallels that in *GA* almost exactly: *Onos* did not want to abbreviate this gruesome fantasy, and *GA* did not need to add much to it. The significant difference in *GA* is that there is reference to a debate on the appropriate method of death, to which this is a solution (GA 6.31.1): “The first recommended that the girl be burned alive, the second urged that she be thrown to the beasts, the third ordered her hung on a cross, the fourth instructed them to strip the flesh from her bones through instruments of torture.” *GA* ends with a flourish (6.32.2: “She won’t even be able to take her own death in her own hands—her hands won’t be free to do it!”) that *Onos* incorporates a little earlier.

In both texts, the image of a young woman not able to emerge from her animal sheath (the dead ass) suggests a transformation not achieved, a pointed parallel to Lucius’s own entrapment within an ass.

## SECTION TWENTY-SIX

(cf. GA 6.32.3, 7.4.1, 7.12.5–7.13.7)

**The Overlap:** Only a very simple core is the same: the maiden is rescued and returns home.

**Key Divergences:** This is another passage in which the *Metamorphoseis* has been violently reworked. *GA* devotes ten pages (7.4.2–7.12.4) to the exploits of Charite’s fiancé, Tlepolemus; consequently, that passage has only a schematic relation to *Onos* 26. This one sentence betrays the excision, again, of a tale not immediately relevant to Lucius: “And it just so happened that the man who was betrothed to the girl had come along with them; in fact, he was the one who betrayed the robbers’ hideout.”

In the long passage in *GA* 7.1.3–7.2.3, a robber appears and tells the story of the aftermath of the break-in at Milo’s: Lucius is thought to be the guilty party (he had disappeared, after all), although his slave boy gave no evidence against him, despite being tortured; none of this is in *Onos*. Lucius’s thoughts on Fortune and his own misfortune (*GA* 7.2.4–7.3.5) are unparalleled in *Onos* as well. The man who brings the news then tells of a new recruit, a physically imposing man who turns out to be Charite’s fiancé, Tlepolemus, though he is now passing himself off as Haemus, a famous Thracian robber. In another long passage (*GA* 7.4–12) we learn his story: he pretends to join the robbers’ band; he gives them two thousand gold coins in token of his earnest (7.8.2); he proposes, while in disguise, that they sell Charite to a bordello, and so prefer profit over revenge. When she laughs at this, the ass is shocked, and condemns all women as faithless by her example (Lucius in *Onos* is not allowed such a moral condemnation of human action until Section 38, when he expresses his contempt for the Syrian priests); but of course she has recognized him. He acts as cook and servant, replacing the old woman; having gained their trust, he drugs their wine; when surreptitiously getting food to Charite, he steals kisses as well; finally, the ass realizes the truth of Charite’s faithfulness. Tlepolemus ties up all of the robbers, puts Charite on Lucius’s back, and they head home (7.12.5).

The couple returns to their hometown in a triumphant procession, and Charite is returned to her parents. What follows in *GA* is not in *Onos*: Tlepolemus takes Lucius along with him when he and others go straight back to

the robbers' camp; the money is taken from the robbers and piled on Lucius and other beasts of burden; the robbers are killed by the townspeople who came along, not by soldiers; there is no regional governor involved (*Onos* is more interested in Roman administration than *GA* is); the money is put in the public treasury; Charite is given to Tlepolemus, "in accordance with the law." The ass comments (*GA* 7.13.7), "What joy was ours! How happy we were in such a retribution!"

**They all let out a great cry . . . a coffin for a guiltless girl:**

This represents two sentences in *GA* (6.32.3, 7.4.1), ending: "I dropped my head and kept on staring up at my belly, already giving birth to that poor little, late little girl."

**I had been on ahead, braying out the good news:** *GA* 7.13.3: "I pricked up my ears, I flared my nostrils, and I brayed for all I was worth—or, rather, I made the city echo with a roar like thunder."

## PART 6: MISFORTUNES ON THE FARM

*Onos* 27–33 = *GA* 7.14–28

**The Overlap:** This part of the narrative shows off most clearly the characteristic differences between *Onos* and *GA* in terms of style and fullness; in terms of plot, the two versions cover the same ground almost exactly, and even share small details and flourishes, all the way to *GA* 7.24.2: permission to graze with the mares, rivalry with the jealous stallions, working at the grain mill, the various incidents with the nasty ass driver, the threats of death and castration.

**Key Divergences:** Apuleius maintains a love of presenting decisions in terms of debate: one alternative reward is proposed before determining that the ass should be allowed

to mount the mares (GA 7.14.4–5). The ass's mistreatment by the jealous stallions goes on at considerable length; the man who proposes castrating the ass has more to say. One interesting difference is in how the ass, contemplating castration, imagines the relationship between his human self and his ass body, with *Onos* being a little more complex as Lucius speaks to himself: "because I was about to lose then and there the man inside the ass, and I kept saying that I didn't want to live any longer if I was going to become a eunuch" (*Onos* 33); "for the fact that I would die completely through that tail-end part of my body I was wailing and weeping" (GA 7.24.1).

What follows this section in GA 7.24.3–7.28.4 has no parallel in *Onos*: another trip up the mountain, the appearance of the bear that puts the ass to flight and kills the boy; the herdsmen and the traveler who argue over the possession of the ass; the discovery of the parts of the boy's body; the ass's return to the stable; the boy's mother beating the ass because he didn't try to save her son's life; the ass's self-defense through well-aimed diarrhea. The threat of castration, however, still hangs over him (GA 7.26.5). Is this an example of Apuleius's originality, an amplification of the original? (See Tilg, 15–17, on what Eckard Lefèvre calls *Appendix-Technik* in GA.) Or does *Onos* cut a scene in which Lucius does not appear (the boy's death) and is therefore compelled to cut a scene in which Lucius does appear (the mother seeking vengeance)? If so, in paring away everything from *Metamorphoseis* that is not Lucius-centered, *Onos* pays a certain price.

But clear evidence of *Onos*'s radical condensation of *Metamorphoseis* follows. The long and tragic story about Charite, Tlepolemus, and Thrasyllus (GA 8.1.1–8.14.5) also has no parallel in *Onos*: we will soon hear only that the unnamed wife and husband are unexpectedly killed by a wave from the sea (*Onos* 34). Further, the subsequent stories told during the ass's travels after Charite's estate is broken up and sold (GA 8.15–22: wolves, shepherds, serpent, ants; stories in which Lucius has little personal involvement) also have no parallel; consequently Section

34, the next section in *Onos*, will be merely a clumsy one-paragraph bridge between the threat of castration and the market scene at which the ass will be sold to the priests of the Syrian goddess.

## SECTION TWENTY-SEVEN

(cf. GA 7.14.1–7.15.2)

The parallels are close: enough hay to stuff a camel; resentment that Palaestra/Photis hadn't turned him into a dog, as the dogs are eating scraps from the wedding feast; the maiden telling her father what she owes the ass; the decision to let him mount the mares; the stablemaster. In GA, that final reward is determined after a small debate; the ass allows himself to expect that soon he will find roses, be restored, and then receive even greater honors. Possibly a reference to the wedding is missing at the beginning of this section; the gap could be filled with something like "at the order of my mistress" or "while the ceremonies were going on."

## SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT

(cf. GA 7.15.3–7.17.1)

Again, the parallels are close: the ass is handed over to the stablemaster's wife (here given a name, Megapole); he grinds grain for her and for her neighbors; he is given inferior food to eat; when he is let out among the mares, the stallions kick him unmercifully. GA expands on this, especially in describing the attacks of the stallions, compared to the flesh-eating horses of the mythical king Diomedes of Thrace; in *Onos*, the ass, happy in neither place, begins to waste away.

**Candaules:** The king of Lydia known from the opening pages of Herodotus's *Histories* (1.8.2) as one proverbial for

a man born to misfortune: "It just had to happen to turn out badly for Candaules."

**Megapole:** How meaningful is this name? If *-pole* is from a verb meaning "to turn," then "Big Grinder" (here, Mrs. Crank) suggests both her job and the ass's job. She is unnamed in *GA*.

## SECTION TWENTY-NINE

(cf. *GA* 7.17.2–7.18.1)

Again, the parallels are close: the wretched boy, the firewood, the steep path up the mountain, the heavy burdens, rocks being added to balance a slipping load, the boy riding behind the firewood when crossing the stream. Apuleius's ass driver definitely wears boots; in *Onos*, the term is not so specific.

## SECTION THIRTY

(cf. *GA* 7.18.2–7.19.2)

Parallels are clear: the boy beating the ass whenever he fell and not offering a hand up; the beatings themselves make the ass stand up; the boy contriving the vicious torture device of the bundle of brambles tied to the tail. *GA* adds at 7.18.2 an explanation of why the ass would fall: slipping on the mud of the riverbank. This useful detail would seem to be carelessly omitted in *Onos*, as there seems to be no design for abridgement here.

## SECTION THIRTY-ONE

(cf. *GA* 7.19.3–7.20.3)

The ass kicks the boy; the boy takes revenge by setting a load of hemp on fire; the ass puts it out by throwing himself down in a deep puddle; the boy lies and says that the ass brushed against a hearth on purpose and caused the

fire. In *Onos*, the boy steals a stick “from the hearth” when it is time to get going; in *GA* 7.20.3, the boy steals a live coal from the nearest farmhouse, and says that the ass purposefully brushed up against coal braziers in the neighbors’ fields. In neither version is the lie at all plausible; *GA* has the boy compare the ass to a salamander, the “beast that lives in fire” (*GA* 7.20.3).

## SECTION THIRTY-TWO

(cf. *GA* 7.20.4–21.5)

Parallels here are particularly close: the ass is led back empty after transporting a load of firewood; the boy’s lie that the ass tries to rape women and boys (“he bites them—that’s his imposture of a kiss” [*Onos* 32]; “with a ghastly apology for a kiss on his lying and lickerish lips he nuzzles them and tries his love-bites” [*GA* 7.21.3]); the particular charge that he had to be pulled off of a woman by passersby attracted by her cries; she would have been split in two. *GA* adds the detail that such an action would bring criminal charges and the death penalty for all involved. Note how the ass has now been imagined as a cause of death for two women (first with the robbers’ plans for dispensing with Charite; later, he will be afraid that he will kill the matron who has bought his services: *Onos* 51, *GA* 10.22.1–2).

**the same master:** This is often emended to “his master.” The master of the ass, who gives the abominable boy orders, is different from the owner of the estate, elliptically referred to at the beginning of Section 33: “And if *he* asks, ‘How did he die?’ blame it on a wolf!”

## SECTION THIRTY-THREE

(cf. *GA* 7.22.1–7.24.2)

With his usual expansive interests, Apuleius covers the same ground but in greater detail, presenting a debate with a motion to be carried at the end of it: *Onos* has the boy address a master, while *GA* has a group of herdsmen as an audience; in *Onos*, the ass is to have his guts fed to dogs and his meat given to field hands, but in *GA*, they talk of how to preserve the hide; in *Onos*, the boy is to blame a wolf if explanations are necessary, but in *GA*, the group of them say that they will blame a wolf. In both, the boy is ready to kill the ass, but someone speaks up, explaining the advantages of castration: the ass will be meeker, milder, fatter, more willing to carry loads—no longer a legal problem. The proposer will come back in three or four days (*Onos*) or a few days (*GA* 7.23.4: *spatio modico interiecto*) to perform the deed; this leaves the ass time to mourn his fate and to contemplate death by starvation, or death by a leap off a cliff—an opportunity to die “in one piece” (a point made in both texts).

## PART 7: IN THE SERVICE OF THE SYRIAN PRIESTS

*Onos* 34–41 = *GA* 8.1.1–4; 8.15; 8.23–9.4; 9.8.1–9.10.4a

**The Overlap:** The maiden whom the ass rescued, and who had tried to rescue him, is now dead, and her family has collapsed. The estate is up for grabs, and the slaves see their chance: they take all they can and settle down elsewhere, in a town where the animals are auctioned off. There, Lucius is acquired by one Philebus, a priest of the Syrian goddess, despised by the ass as a charlatan and a sexual degenerate. The ass will serve to carry the statue of the goddess from town to town. As Philebus and his troupe travel, they earn

donations of money and food from spectators impressed by their ecstatic dancing and bloody self-mutilation. They use the sexual services of a young man they have invited to their lodgings; the ass, appalled by what he sees, tries to cry out his disgust; his braying draws the attention of some locals who are looking for a missing ass; they discover the priests and turn them out, mocking them. The humiliated priests travel on, pausing to tie the ass to a tree, intending to beat him to death, but they spare him because the goddess still needs her conveyance. Stopping at a wealthy man's estate, the priests are treated well, but the ass is nearly butchered by the cook; the ass escapes the cook but is thought for a time to be rabid; ultimately, he leaves healthy and in one piece with the priests. They visit one last village; on leaving, they are found guilty of having stolen a golden chalice from a local goddess; the priests are arrested, the chalice returned, the statue confiscated, and the ass is ready to be sold again.

**Key Divergences:** Apuleius includes stand-alone stories of various length and complexity. Some certainly drew on material in the Greek original, others not certainly: the story of the death of Charite (GA 8.1.5–8.14.5), the adventures in wolf country on the way to Beroea (GA 8.15.5–8.22.7), the tale of the adulterer in the jar (GA 9.5–7). It is odd that *Onos* doesn't have the scene in which men test to see whether the ass is rabid by having him drink water (GA 9.3.1–9.4.2); and while there is much evidence throughout that *Onos* has cut down its original to create an intense focus on Lucius, even at the cost of logical transitions among scenes, it can't be denied that the Syrian priests have a certain life of their own. Apuleius, on the other hand, can be presumed to have greatly increased the presence of the priests and the detail with which they are described in order to make the worship of, and the worshippers of, the Syrian goddess stand in counterpoint to the holiness of Isis and her followers.

## SECTION THIRTY-FOUR

(cf. *GA* 8.1.1–4; 8.15.1–4; 8.23.1)

Covering the collapse of the family of the still-unnamed maiden, the escape of the household, and the arrival at Beroea, this section of *Onos* represents a violent condensation of the original. At *GA* 8.1.1–4, a messenger arrives and announces that he will tell the sad tale of the death of Charite; the whole story of Charite, Tlepolemus, and Thrasylus (*GA* 8.1.5–8.14.5) is unparalleled, and in its place is this clumsy abridgement (but see van Thiel, 1.120–24, for a defense of its narration) of what must have been a different story, given that it ended with death from the sea. *GA* 8.15.1–4, the reaction of the slaves to the news and the hasty departure with all the goods they can carry, parallels *Onos* 34.3–4, down to the ass’s willingness to carry burdens because of his relief at not being castrated after all (*GA* 8.15.4: “And the weight of my bags and my bales, great though it was, did not bend and bow my back—no; I was leaving behind me in a gladsome getaway that detestable detestulator of my manhood.”). Adventures in wolf country on the way to Beroea occupy a large portion of Book 8 (*GA* 8.15.5–8.22.7) and find no parallel in *Onos*: stopping in a village where they are warned not to travel on at night or at dawn because of wolves; being mistaken for robbers when they do travel; being attacked and bloodied; losing one of their company to a giant snake who may have taken on the guise of an old man to trick them; learning the story of the adulterous slave whose wife killed their son and herself, and who was himself killed by his master—tied to a tree, smeared with honey, and devoured by ants.

**a young master and mistress:** Both in *The Golden Ass* and in *Onos* there is a serious illogicality embedded in this part of the story. Charite was returned to the house of her parents; it was her father who saw to it that the ass was to be well taken care of, though those plans were subverted by others on the estate. Apuleius says that when Charite killed herself, her parents prepared her body for burial; *Onos* only

says that the bride and groom were killed. But the parents are not said to be dead. Why would the estate collapse when the parents of the bride, who owned it, were still there? The parents have been forgotten by the narrator in both texts; perhaps in the original *Metamorphoseis* as well. The household is making calculations based on a generalization: any household with young masters who are both dead can be plundered and abandoned with impunity, because there would be no children and heirs.

**Beroea:** This is the same town in Macedonia as is mentioned in the New Testament (Acts 17.10–15); the town is not named in *GA* 8.23.1.

## SECTION THIRTY-FIVE

(cf. *GA* 8.23.2–8.25.6a)

In *GA*, there is a three-day wait to fatten up the animals before sale; one of the reasons that the ass is last to be sold is that he has bitten one of the potential purchasers. There is a much longer encounter between the auctioneer and the priest: the auctioneer proclaims the worthlessness of the ass, and makes fun of the priest, whose perversions he presumes. He suggests that the priest is interested in the sexual prowess and submissiveness of the ass; the priest is highly indignant. In *GA*, this serves to introduce the worship of the Syrian goddess as the antithesis of the holy worship of Isis with which *GA* will conclude. Apuleius has made this opening scene more prominent, while the simpler scene in *Onos* serves a different purpose: the ass views his new owner as another in a series of punishments as he falls from what he thought would be his salvation, life as a well-fed ass in the pasture with the mares.

**trying to search out the age of each of us by our teeth:** We wish that Lucius had told us just what age they determined him to be. In *GA* 8.23.4–5, the ass bites the hand of an inquisitive purchaser before he can make a determination, scaring off other potential buyers; at *GA* 8.24.3, when

Philebus asks the auctioneer about the ass's age, we hear comic evasions: "The astrologer who read his stars and cast his horoscope calculated that this is his fifth year, but the ass himself, of course, knows the number better; it's on file with the rest of his census data."

**Nemesis:** A personification of Divine Retribution. In *GA* 8.24.1, the ass complains of his Fortune: "But my fortune—*that* Fortune, Fortune most savage and sadistic, the Fortune whom I could not flee though I flew from her through so many regions, whom I could not appease despite all the evils I had been through—again turned her blind eyes on me and threw before me a buyer—that she found *him* surpasses belief—one most particularly suited to my own back-breaking catastrophes." In fact, it is hard to see why the ass in *Onos* blames Nemesis; her description as one who turns things upside down seems more appropriate for Fortune. As it stands, Nemesis is in line with the earlier reference to Candaules: the luckless ass just gets what's coming to him.

**thirty drachmas:** Seventeen denarii in *GA*, a considerably smaller sum. For the various purchase prices of the ass, see *How Much Is the Ass Worth?*

## SECTION THIRTY-SIX

(cf. *GA* 8.25.6b–8.26.6)

The name of the priest is Philebus in both versions (my in-text translation of the name, *Loverboy*, tries to suggest the fundamental meaning of "Lover of Boys") and in both he leads the ass back to the rest of his entourage, effeminate men who think at first that they have been brought a handsome man. In both, the group mocks the priest, but in *GA* they remind him to share. In *GA* only, the ass meets a fellow slave, a flute player in their public performances who is compelled into sexual service behind closed doors. He is relieved to see that the ass will take these burdens off of him: "long may you please your masters—and give

a break to my long-aching, now exhausted loins" (GA 8.26.6).

## SECTION THIRTY-SEVEN

(cf. GA 8.27–28)

In both texts there is a description of a typical day's work of performance and begging. The goddess is clothed and put on the ass (in GA 8.27.1–2, the priests' clothing is elaborately described); they travel until they come to a village; the ass stands still, the flute players play, and the priests dance ecstatically and cut themselves; there is so much blood that the ass fears that the goddess may want his blood too; the audience makes donations of money and food. In GA, the performance is said to be enhanced when they find some really rich landowner; the enhanced performance involves a pretense of divine inspiration, an elaborate public confession of the worshipper's violation of religious laws, the pronouncement of false prophecies, and flagellation with a whip made of wool and knucklebones. Again, this would seem to suggest more Apuleius's elaboration than *Onos*'s simplification, except that in the next section of *Onos*, reference is made to *that* knucklebone whip, suggesting it had been mentioned before.

**Next, we took our time riding out of the city:** The translation emphasizes the imperfect tense.

## SECTION THIRTY-EIGHT

(cf. GA 8.29.1–8.30.3)

In both texts the priests go to a new village; they bring a local young man to participate in their sexual activities. In GA, they've had rich pickings; they demand a ram for their feast, arrange everything, go to the baths, and come back with the young man. In both the ass is horrified to watch their debauchery (GA 8.29.4: "They stripped him, laid him

flat on his back, and surged upon him in waves from every direction, demanding his services with their unspeakable mouths.”); in both the ass tries to cry out his disapproval, but can only bray out “O!” In both, the sound brings in a group of villagers who were looking for a missing ass; they discover this orgy and turn the priests out amid much mockery. The priests take to the road and decide, when far enough removed, to strip the ass, tie him to a tree, and beat him to death with the knucklebone whip. Reasons vary: in *Onos* and *GA*, the priests had been humiliated; in *Onos*, their business in the village was left incomplete; in *GA*, because the ass had imposed celibacy on one man by his interruption, and this man wanted to castrate him with an axe. In both, the need of a conveyance for the goddess keeps the ass alive.

**I’m putting up with my misfortunes up to this point:** Some take these words as part of the ass’s exclamation (Macleod: “Cruel Jupiter, to think that my sufferings have come to this”), but I believe that the first word of the exclamation here, as at *Onos* 16, has to be “O!”; the other words are addressed to the reader.

**“O merciless Zeus!”:** A strong phrase. At *GA* 8.29.5, Lucius wants to cry out to the citizenry, not the gods: “I was impatient to cry out, *SOS, O Citizens!* but all that came out was *O!*”

**that whip of theirs:** It hasn’t been mentioned before, and indicates some minor abridgement; cf. *GA* 8.30.2: “[they] flog me with that whip, the one with the sheep bones; they very nearly do me to death.”

## SECTION THIRTY-NINE

(cf. *GA* 8.30.4–9.1.1)

These passages are closely parallel, but with many small variations alongside the usual elaboration of detail in *GA*: the priest and the ass arrive at the house of a wealthy man

who wants to worship the goddess, but the story turns to the cook who, through inattention, allowed a pack of dogs (*Onos*; *GA*, a lone dog) to eat a haunch of meat (*Onos*, of a wild ass; *GA*, of a stag) that had been sent to him (*Onos*, by a tenant farmer; *GA*, by some friends). The cook intends to kill himself, but his wife encourages him to kill and butcher the ass instead, substituting the ass's haunch. The cook praises his wife (*Onos* gives his actual words; *GA* only reports) and prepares (*GA*, prepares his knives); in both, the ass ponders how the cook is planning his death.

It seems a day passes here: the priests leave at night and beat the ass at night; then they arrive at the estate at the next nightfall.

It is worth noting the impression created by the concentration of action in *Onos*: whipping by the priests, the cook's plans, the swords drawn against the supposedly rabid ass, all occur in quick succession. The theme is not so much how Lucius survives a series of close calls as how he is under constant threat of death.

## SECTION FORTY

(cf. *GA* 9.1.2–9.2.6)

There are three events in *Onos*, one rapidly after the other: 1) to avoid the cook, the ass bolts into the dining room, expecting the master of the estate to hand him over to someone's care (the reason is not clearly stated in *Onos*, but the master would not order the death of the animal that carries the statue of the goddess that he means to honor; *GA* makes it clear that it is a religious dinner that is being interrupted); 2) the assembled guests think him rabid and draw their swords; 3) the ass runs into the bedroom assigned to the priests and the door is closed. The story is much more elaborate in *GA*, where the possibility of rabies is fully explained. A slave boy rushes in to say that a rabid bitch has been biting every person (Myrtilus the mule driver, Hephaestio the cook, Hypnophilus the chamberlain, Apollonius the doctor, and others unnamed) and

every animal in sight (including the hunting dogs), and the guests figure this explains the ass's behavior. Leaving him in a locked room is then prudent behavior; the animal can die of his disease without putting anyone else at risk. GA 9.2.6 has the ass add the nice detail that he got to sleep on a comfortable bed: "I embraced the gift of Fortune—the gift of isolation—and I lay down upon a bed that was all made up and, after a long, long time indeed, I slept the sleep of a human being."

In this section of *Onos*, there seems to be a conscious use of present tenses for vivid effect; these tenses are preserved.

## SECTION FORTY-ONE

(GA 9.3–4; 9.8.1–9.10.4a; 9.5–7, the tale of the adulterer in the jar, has no parallel)

The end of the account of the ass's adventures with the beggar priests is the same in both versions: they are found to have stolen a golden chalice from the shrine of a local goddess; the chalice is recovered and the priests are put in jail; the stage is set for another sale and another owner. The path to this end, however, varies significantly.

There is an obvious sign of the abbreviation of *Onos* here: *Onos* does not explain why the attackers give up on thinking that the ass is rabid. He simply goes from being locked up to setting out the next morning: "And when it was dawn already I took up the goddess and was on my way again along with the wandering beggars." In GA 9.3.1–9.4.2, the men who were assigned to watch by the ass's door all night peek in to see if he is alive, and slowly test his health by seeing if he will drink water; when he does so, he's free to leave. *Onos* would seem to cut out the deliberations of the watchmen. Of course, people watching to see what the ass will do plays a large role very soon (*Onos* 46–54, Part 9: Board and Bed). In neither story do we hear what happens to the cook and his wife after the ass goes free.

In *Onos*, the priests say that they have been commanded by their goddess to have her statue lodge in the shrine of the foremost goddess in the area that they've come to. The locals comply gladly, though they assign the priests (no doubt to their disappointment) to poor lodgings; they stay for a few days, then get their statue back and set off. The villagers quickly discover the theft of the golden cup and ride off in pursuit.

In *GA*, they wander from village to village, and at one place they hear the story of the adulterer in the jar (9.5–7), seemingly added by Apuleius without any particular relevance to the story of Lucius—just the sort of complication that *Onos* typically avoids. At *GA* 9.8.2, we hear more about the priests' general practice, and how they make money with their all-purpose prophecy: "For this the team of oxen plows the furrowed earth, / so fertile fields of grain will sprout in times to come." Finally at *GA* 9.9.1–2, the group begins its last day, and we hear about the rain, the mud, and the difficulties of travel; then soldiers, not villagers, appear to apprehend the group as temple robbers. The charge in *GA* is that they had stolen the cup from the banqueting couches of the Mother of the Gods; the priests argue that it had been a gift, but are unconvincing. At this point villagers appear and put them in jail; both the chalice and the statue of the Syrian goddess are put in the temple treasury of the Mother of the Gods. In *Onos*, the cup is returned, but the statue is placed in the temple of another goddess.

**chalice:** Others translate this as "cup." The Greek word can designate a wide range of vessels; the corresponding Latin is *cantharum*, and I preserve "chalice" from the *GA* translation.

**while they were rummaging through everything they found it in the bosom of the goddess:** Zimmerman 2007 points out the parallels between the story of the stolen cup in *GA* and *Onos* and similar stories in the *Life of Aesop* and Genesis (in the tales of Joseph). The well-known motif is that the stolen cup is planted on an *innocent* man

elsewhere; but in our stories, the priests really were guilty all along, and the twisting of the reader's expectations underlines the author's distaste for these charlatans.

## PART 8: THE ASS CHANGES HANDS

*Onos* 42–45 = *GA* 9.10.4b–9.11.6;  
9.31.3–9.32.4; 9.39.2–9.42.4

Four intervening sections have no parallel: 9.12–13, the description of the men and animals working at the mill; 9.14–28, the tales of adultery overheard at the mill; 9.29–31, the death of the mill owner; 9.33–38, the story of the landowner and his three sons.

**The Overlap:** The ass spends time turning a flour mill in a baker's establishment; he is then sold in a weakened state to a truck farmer, who keeps him on lean rations into an uncomfortable winter, without making him work too hard. The farmer has a run-in with a soldier, whom the farmer beats and leaves for dead, escaping to a nearby town. The farmer hides in a chest in the house of a friend there while the ass is hidden away in a locked attic room; the two are eventually discovered (the house needs to be searched twice); the soldiers laugh at the ass, who gave it all away, and the farmer is hauled off to jail and execution.

**Key Divergences:** Only *GA* gives Lucius's sale price. *GA* describes the awful conditions at the mill in loving detail (9.12–13), and has the ass overhear a number of stories of adultery—additions that account for almost half of Book 9. The final story here concerns the revenge the miller's wife takes after her husband divorces her for her infidelity: the services of a witch, the miller's death, his daughter's sale of the estate (9.29–31). Also unparalleled is the account of the truck farmer and his invitation to a lavish lunch at the

home of a landowner whom he had befriended; the landowner hears news of the gruesome death of his three sons in a dispute with a rich neighbor; the landowner then commits suicide (9.33–38), and the truck farmer never gets his lunch. A year clearly passes in *GA*, while *Onos* is not so attentive to the passing of time. In the dispute with the soldier, *GA* provides dialogue that *Onos* has omitted, and the contours of the fight are explained more fully; when the farmer and the ass are the object of the soldiers' search, we hear more about the shame of the defeated soldier; the soldiers tell the local magistrates that the farmer had stolen a silver cup; how they located the farmer and ass is made clear (they described ass and owner in detail, and found a man who was willing to betray his neighbor).

## SECTION FORTY-TWO

(cf. *GA* 9.10.4b–9.11.6)

The two texts are generally parallel: the baker (miller in *GA*) takes the ass to his establishment, where there are many animals at many mills; the ass, after a first day's respite spent blissfully eating his fill, is put to work the next day with blinders on. He pretends not to know how a mill works, but is quickly beaten into obedience. In both texts, the ass quickly works at speed, but only in *Onos* does the ass reflect on an old proverb, that it's best for the slave not to wait for the master's hand. In this section of the story, the ass makes much use of a dramatic present tense, which I have generally retained.

**some dozen bushels:** The text says ten *medimnoi*. If a *medimnos* is fifty liters, and a bushel is thirty-five liters, then ten *medimnoi* are roughly equal to fifteen bushels, which seems too much, but excess is the point; my translation is a round number. While *GA* provides detailed information here about the amount of the sale (9.10.5: "snapped me up at a higher price, seven *sesterces* more than the seventeen *denarii* that Philebus had paid for me before"), it does not

quantify the amount of wheat (“he buys some grain as well, loads me up, full to bursting”).

## SECTION FORTY-THREE

(cf. GA 9.31.3–9.32.4)

The texts are again roughly parallel: the ass describes the truck farmer’s daily routine, and how the farmer worked in the garden while the ass stood around; he then describes the agonies of winter (no straw bedding, walking on mud and ice, eating old lettuce). What is distinctive about GA is that the ass says that he was happy at first (9.32.2: “I was brought back to life in calm and quiet, at my leisure, at least for the present”); he describes the change of seasons from fall to winter; he says that his stall had no roof, making the winter especially wet and cold; he describes the lettuce in sickening detail (9.32.4: “old foul heads of lettuce, overgrown, past their prime, gone to seed, looking like brooms, a bitter-tasting mass of rot, running with a muddy juice”).

**my master decided to sell me:** The stories of adultery in GA give a general impression of the passage of time in the life of the ass. The transition in *Onos* is very abrupt (“and so I was becoming emaciated . . .”) and suggests some sort of abridgement. Further, GA does not designate the seller but only the buyer as a master; in *Onos*, both the seller and the buyer are called master.

**truck farmer:** Greek κηπουρός, Latin *hortulanus*. I preserve “truck farmer” from my translation in GA, though the Greek needs mean no more than “gardener.”

**And my life at that time was most agonizing for me:** The Greek text has missed a season: these are the pains of winter but, as is clear in GA, the ass’s life is at first one of relative ease, while the weather is good.

**(and on ice):** The text as printed by van Thiel would translate to “oozing mud, very stiff and stabbing”; van Thiel

preserves the text's error, but the parallel in *GA* makes it clear that the ass complains both of the mud and of what we would call the skim ice over it. With the emendation I follow Macleod's Oxford text.

## SECTION FORTY-FOUR

(cf. *GA* 9.39.2–9.40.4)

The account of the farmer's encounter with the soldier is longer and more interesting in *GA*, and not just because it comes after the episode at the rich man's estate, a tale of evil omens, of brave sons killed in a dispute with a neighbor, of the suicide of the father. (Note how this tale of the destruction of a family and a household is rather like the earlier tale of Charite in *GA*; *Onos* has no interest in such diversions.) For the truck farmer in *GA*, the upshot is that he doesn't get the lunch that he was promised, or the wine and grain that were to be recompense for the hospitality the farmer showed the landowner on a rainy night, and he meets the soldier while coming back home empty-handed. In *Onos*, the confrontation with the soldier just happens "one day."

In *Onos*, the farmer meets a soldier who is insulted when the farmer refuses to answer his Latin question about where he's taking the ass. The soldier assaults the farmer, but is bested in the brawl that follows; ultimately, the soldier plays dead and the farmer escapes, loading the soldier's sword on the ass. In *GA*, the Roman soldier finally explains in Greek that he wants the ass to help his commanding officer move some bundles. There is dialogue; the farmer fights to keep the ass only after his attempt to describe the ass as epileptic and useless fails. In both, the farmer grabs the soldier's sword and throws it out of bounds, as it were, after hearing the soldier say that he will kill the farmer with that sword if he ever can get on his feet again.

**a noble gentleman:** Forms of this adjective are also used to describe the two cooks at 47 (γενναϊότατοι), and the maiden's noble daring at 23.

**in the Latin language at first:** This is a clumsy reworking, as Macleod points out; we don't hear of a subsequent switch to Greek. In *GA*, after the farmer conveys that he cannot understand the soldier's Latin, the soldier asks in Greek where the farmer is leading the ass. In *Oinos*, the farmer seems never to speak at all.

**knocks his feet out from under him:** In *GA*, the farmer kneels before the soldier, seemingly in supplication; this is the ruse by which he grabs the soldier by the ankles.

**avoiding trouble at all costs:** The Greek has an abrupt parenthetical phrase (τὸ ἀκινδυνότατον = the least risky thing); that stem will recur at 45.1 (τὸν κίνδυνον τὸν ἐκ τῆς ὁδοῦ), meaning "the trouble that he had gotten himself into on the road."

**the sword he loaded on:** In both texts, the sword is thrown far away in the course of the fight, then retrieved when it's over. Its importance is soon made clear.

## SECTION FORTY-FIVE

(cf. *GA* 9.40.4–9.42.4)

The elaborations in *GA* do not complicate the plot: the farmer runs to the city and has his friends hide him in a chest in a house, while the ass is hauled up to an upper room and locked in. The soldiers arrive and learn where the two are lodged; town officials and magistrates are summoned and the house is searched; neither farmer nor ass is found at first, but the ass, looking out from the window to see the confusion below, gives the game away. The owner's lies are revealed, the gardener is led off to jail, and the story ends in laughter for the ass who betrayed his owner.

There are many differences in *GA*; again, we suspect that details not thought to be strictly relevant to the ass's

predicament have been removed in *Onos*. We are told of the soldier's shame, and how he fears for his life because he lost the sword by which he swore his oath to the emperor; he tells his comrades, who promise to help; he describes the features of both farmer and ass (so we learn parenthetically), and the comrades begin a search; the soldiers make up a story about how the farmer stole a silver cup (clearly parallel to the gold chalice in the story of the priests); they quickly find a man who betrays his neighbor, the one who has housed the runaways. The owner tells a number of lies in order to protect his friend; it is made clearer in *GA* than in *Onos* that he will be executed for his crimes. Further, in *GA*, a two-pronged proverb is said to have its origin here (9.42.4: *de prospectu et umbra*, "All because an ass stuck his nose out" and "All because of the shadow of an ass"; in *Onos*, simply: "All because an ass stuck his nose out.")

**sticking my nose into everything:** πάντα περίεργος. The Greek is parallel to the Latin *curiosus*, translated through-out *GA* as "sticking one's nose in": "inclined to stick my nose in under normal circumstances, and now an ass endowed with an impudence that could not sit still" (*GA* 9.42.2).

**unquenchably, as Homer says:** The text does not include "as Homer says," but the reference to Homer (*Iliad* 1. 599, *Odyssey* 20. 346) is unmistakable. This epic intrusion has a comic effect, and deserves to be noted.

**All because an ass stuck his nose out:** Apuleius's fullness in referring to two proverbs at once is much appreciated here. The implication is that the shadow of the ass is what gave him away, and it is the shadow that is central to the proverbial tale. This goes back to a story told about Demosthenes: he complained about judges who wanted hear the end of a story about a man who was sued for sleeping in the shadow of a rented ass (its owner had rented the ass only, he claimed, and not its shadow), but who would not pay attention to the real matter at hand, a man on trial for his life. In other words, this event in the life of Lucius the

ass is not the origin of this proverb. But here too, the fate of the farmer who is about to lose his life is overlooked in favor of interest in the story about the ass. The two texts agree: *GA* 10.1.1: "On the following day, my master the truck farmer—well, I have no idea what happened to him"; *Onos* 46 begins: "On the following day, what happened to my master the gardener I have no idea." In both texts, there is a latent question directed toward the reader: *Why are you so concerned with the tale of a fictional ass?*

## PART 9: BOARD AND BED

*Onos* 46–52 = *GA* 10.1.1; 10.13.1–10.29.2

**The Overlap:** This section is crucial to the story of Lucius, the young man who learns once again how to eat and drink, how to act human and be sociable; to the extent that *Onos* has reduced an expansive original story to folk-tale proportions, here is where the naïve boy becomes a man. His relations with Palaestra/Photis are no longer relevant. Once Lucius becomes an ass, his life is rebooted, as it were, and the question becomes: What must he do, like Pinocchio, to become a real live, mature man? Even the admittedly grotesque sex scene with the woman teaches the young man that sex is not going to kill the woman. In *GA*, however, with its themes of wickedness and redemption, this episode ultimately represents a degradation from which only divine epiphany may rescue him.

The main actions are the same: cooks buy the ass and discover that he eats human food; the master invites him to table; the master buys him and has him trained as a dinner companion; the ass becomes the master's favorite conveyance as he gathers animals and men for his gladiatorial games. He is renowned for nodding yes and no. Before the games, his fame is such that people pay to see him and one woman pays to have sex with him; the master thinks it a

great idea to have the ass rape a condemned woman at his games.

**Key Divergences:** To continue the themes established in the adultery stories of Book 9, *GA* in Book 10 bookends this section of the narrative with two long stories not present in *Onos*: the tale of the wicked stepmother (*GA* 10.2.1–10.12.5), and the tale of the condemned woman (*GA* 10.23.3–10.29.2). A smaller unparalleled passage in *GA* comes at the beginning, how the soldier loaded up the ass with his military equipment and marched away. There are important differences concerning the master (Meneclēs in *Onos*, Thiasus in *GA*) and his preparations for the games. In *Onos*, all the action is in Thessalonice: the master lives there, travels from there with the ass on his expedition for animals and gladiators for his games, and returns there. In *GA*, we never learn the name of the town where the cooks buy the ass; but Thiasus, after going on his expedition, returns by land and sea to Corinth, where Lucius is said to come from (*GA* 10.18.1 [Thiasus]; 1.1.3, 2.12.3 [Lucius]). Corinth is Apuleius’s innovation: Lucius in *GA* will come full circle, regaining his shape in his hometown; not so Lucius in *Onos*, who goes home to Patras in the last sentence.

## SECTION FORTY-SIX

(cf. *GA* 10.1.1, 10.13–14; 10.2.1–10.12.5, the wicked story about the stepmother, the stepson, and the doctor, is unparalleled)

The two texts are very much alike: The ass says he doesn’t know what happened to the farmer. The soldier sells the ass (*GA* adds the reason: the soldier needs to travel to Rome with a letter for the emperor himself. This means the soldier was lying back when he said that his commanding officer needed the ass); he is purchased by two brothers, cooks in a rich man’s service; they keep the ass in their rooms. When they bring back the leftovers from the master’s dinner, they set their table and go to the baths; the ass

rejects the barley provided (*GA* speaks of hay) and eats the human food with enthusiasm. He starts out cautiously at first, for fear of being caught, but over the course of days eats more and more so that the brothers eventually notice their loss. Each accuses the other of being a thief and starts keeping a closer accounting of their food.

The differences are interesting. *GA* starts (10.1.1–3) with a curious description of how the soldier packed all his military equipment onto the ass, so that he looked like an army on the march; he reaches a town and remands the ass to the care of a slave of a town councilor while he goes to report to his commanding officer. The ass then tells the story he heard there about the stepmother, the stepson, and the doctor (10.2.1–10.12.5). The narrative resumes with the sale of the ass; it ends with a longish passage including two speeches in which the brothers attack each other.

**twenty-five Attic drachmas:** In *GA*, the price is a mere eleven denarii, the lowest price at which the ass is sold in either text; as the soldier confiscated the ass, any price at all is profit. The twenty-five-drachma price in *Onos* here is more realistic, and seems to be the going rate; see *How Much Is the Ass Worth?*

**Thessalonice:** *GA* does not name the town. At *GA* 10.18.1, we learn that the master's name is Thiasus (Mr. Revels) and that his hometown is Corinth, where the spectacle in *GA* will be held; at *Onos* 49, we learn that the master's name is Meneclēs (Mr. Renown); both *Onos* and *GA* enjoy deferring the names of the characters, when they mention them at all.

**parsimoniously and in trepidation:** *GA* 10.14.1: "quite cautiously and modestly."

**careful counters:** *GA* 10.14.3: "and were now paying closer attention, keeping keener custody and count of their portions."

## SECTION FORTY-SEVEN

(cf. GA 10.15–16)

GA tells the story in more loving detail, but it is the same story: the ass gets fat, the brothers get suspicious; they observe him eating, and bring in their fellow slaves to look and laugh; the master hears the laughter and comes to see the spectacle; the ass is taken to the master's dinner party so everyone can watch as he eats human food, to the amazement and enjoyment of all; the ass drinks a goblet of wine. Where GA differs is that the foods set before the ass at the banquet are not only extravagant human foods, but some are prepared in such a way as to be distasteful (10.16.5): "There was more, you see: they were making a judicious examination—*Just what, in particular, would this ass find repulsive?*—and were offering it to me to see how tame I was: meat with too much asafetida, poultry rubbed with pepper, fish swimming in *recherché* reductions." Further, more is made of the drinking (10.16.6–9): the guests wonder if he can drink; a slave is told to prepare a cup; the ass drinks mead, not wine, and we hear how he shapes his tongue so as to be able to drink it down; everyone then offers the ass a toast to his health.

**Waves of laughter crashed over the dinner party:** *personabat* at GA 10.16.6 implies echoing; here, τὸ δὲ συμπόσιον ἐκλονεῖτο implies disruption, I think.

## SECTION FORTY-EIGHT

(cf. GA 10.17–18)

The two texts agree that the ass is bought by the master (Meneclēs will be named at the beginning of *Onos* 49; he is Thiasus in GA) at a higher price than the cooks paid, and that the ass is then trained to recline at table, to wrestle, to dance, to nod yes and no. The ass asks for a drink with his eyes.

Surprisingly, both texts describe how happy the ass was to be the master's favorite mode of transportation, dressed in fancy blankets and tricked out with bells (much as the maiden had promised him at *GA* 6.28.5–6). *GA* adds the ass's misgivings that if he were to seem too human he would be killed as an evil portent (*GA* 10.17.5). This is a reasonable motivation for the ass's desire to offer his master a good ride in good animal fashion; in *Onos*, the details about how the ass carries the master are unmotivated. Further, *GA* adds details about Thiasus's actual expeditions to gather animals and gladiators for the games he will give. Unique to *GA* is the description of how Thiasus was preparing to put on a great show, how he disdained all the extravagant equipage he'd gathered in his search for animals and gladiators, and how he decided to ride on Lucius instead (*GA* 10.18.1–3).

**mind-boggling:** παράδοξον (contrary to expectation, paradoxical) appears twice in this section and eleven times overall in *Onos*; Section 49 begins with a reference to the ass's reputation with the same root (ἡ γὰρ ἐμὴ δόξα: what people expected of me; my reputation).

**pay out my price:** When the cook's master in *Onos* now buys the ass for twice what the cooks paid, he is in fact paying as much as Philebus did, a high price for an ass whose function is to be put on display.

**wrestle:** What exactly is meant? This is worth visualizing. Coming between reclining at table (that is, leaning on one elbow) and standing on both feet, wrestling is an intermediate activity: I find arm wrestling easier to imagine, but grappling from a crouching position would also fit, and be a better parallel to Lucius's earlier wrestling with Palaestra. *Onos* and *GA* are very close here: each has at first a compound verb for *wrestle*, and then an uncompound form soon after (προσπαλαίειν . . . παλαίω; *GA* 10.17.3, 10.17.6: *adluctari* . . . *luctantem*); in both, the compound suggests "face-to-face." Zimmerman 2000 (200) misses this point, I think: the prefix is meaningful, and the switch

from compounded to uncompounded verb forms is quite normal in either language.

## SECTION FORTY-NINE

(cf. GA 10.19.1a)

Here, the passage in *Onos* corresponds to a much shorter sentence in *GA*: “And when our journey, part by land and part by sea, was over and we had come to Corinth, surging crowds of its citizens came together in waves not, or so it seemed, in deference to Mr. Revels’s dignity so much as longing for the sight of me.” In both, the crowds gather more to see the ass than in anticipation of the gladiatorial spectacle, but *Onos* is quite different: the goal is not Corinth, there is no journey over water, we hear of the gladiators practicing; most interesting, in *Onos*, the master only shows off the ass’s dining room entertainments to his most distinguished fellow citizens. Evidently, they are in town for a while before the games begin.

**had arrived there from Thessalonice:** The text has not made it clear where Menecles went on his expedition, only that he is now coming back to Thessalonice for the production of the spectacle.

## SECTION FIFTY

(cf. GA 10.19.1b–10.19.4)

The two texts are very close. Only *Onos* notes that the people who lined up to pay to see the ass brought food to test him with; *GA* makes it clear that the woman is married, and this allows the ass some moral and literary commentary (GA 10.19.3): “She could find no other cure for her lunatic lust but, a simulacrum of an ass-mad Pasiphaë, she longed for and panted after my embrace.”

**antithetical to the digestion of an ass:** This came earlier in *GA* (10.16.5), when the ass’s talents were first being

discovered and the master puts out food and wonders what Lucius will eat; see notes on Section 47.

**massive amount of money:** Cf. GA 10.19.4: “one bountiful bribe.” In both texts, an arrangement is made for a second night under the same terms and conditions (*Onos* 52; GA 10.22.5), but GA 10.23.1, unlike *Onos*, seems to imply that there were further nights as well: “Now my coach kept on dispensing these pleasures in accordance with her desires and devil-may-care was he, partly for pocketing the princely premium she paid him, partly for preparing for his master a brand-new spectacle. And for the master’s benefit, in the fullness of time, he does not hesitate to pull back the curtain on the whole dramatic tableau of our lovemaking.”

## SECTION FIFTY-ONE

(cf. GA 10.20–22)

Some additional details in GA do not distort the great similarities in setting and in action. The ass goes to his room after dinner (evidently the master has provided him with quite a suite) to find the woman there and the room elaborately prepared by her servants (in GA, four eunuchs) with rich coverlets and pillows (in GA, many pillows of different sorts). She removes her clothes, anoints herself and the ass (his nostrils in particular), and leads him to the bed. Her kisses and seductive words get more considerable treatment in GA. He is willing but afraid that he will kill her by splitting her in two; she proves herself capable of his size; they enjoy an exhausting night together; she is compared to Pasiphaë; she leaves at dawn, after arranging to meet again.

**after she removed her clothes:** This stripping sequence is pointedly referred to by contrast at the end (*Onos* 56).

**she lay down next to me compatibly:** The verb form in van Thiel’s text is unparalleled (παρανακειμένη); the

compound suggests not only lying next to but matching up; a related adverb means “correspondingly.”

**she took it inside her, all of it:** Cf. GA 10.22.3: “took me in, absolutely all, and I do mean all.” Dollins (26–27) has an accessible translation and good discussion of the notorious *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* 4762, a fragment, evidently from a mime, of a scene in which a woman narrates in real time her act of sexual intercourse with an ass. It includes a sort of stage direction (“She says, bashfully . . .”) along with exclamations (roughly, “It’s as big as a two-by-four!” and “Easy, easy, not all the way in!”). Whatever the verbal relations between the passage in *Onos* and its source in *Metamorphoseis*, it’s clear that the process of abridgement was not intended to clean it up.

**Pasiphaë’s seducer:** GA 10.19.3 also makes reference to Pasiphaë, wife of king Minos, who had intercourse with a bull and so gave birth to the Minotaur.

## SECTION FIFTY-TWO

(cf. GA 10.23.1–2)

In both, the overseer decides to show to Thiasus/Meneclēs the ass and the woman during their lovemaking; in both, the decision is made to make a public spectacle of it. Here GA is actually a little more compact, even as it says more about how the victim for the spectacle is chosen. “And since that extraordinary wife of mine was unavailable, because of her honor and reputation—since no other woman could be induced at all, even at a generous price—they get some low-rent woman, one condemned by the governor’s decree to be thrown to the beasts, so that she and I together in plain view could fill the cheap seats in the amphitheater. I found out the story behind her punishment: it goes like this.” (GA 10.23.3–10.29.2 is the story of the condemned woman.) The story resumes at 10.29.3: “Now look here! The day appointed for the games had arrived; I am being escorted to the confines of the amphitheater, the whole

town in ceremonial procession along with me, an adulatory parade.”

**courtesy of my efforts:** The Greek is ἐν ἐμοὶ; the same phrase just occurred at the end of the previous section (*Onos* 51).

**as if he himself had coached me in it:** The language reminds us of the wrestling scenes with Palaestra.

**gives the order that the overseer not speak a word of this to anyone outside:** A crucial difference. There is no point made of secrecy in *GA*; what will happen in *Onos* depends upon the audience expecting to see the antics of the eating, drinking, dancing ass, while Meneclēs has been preparing a sex show as a shocking surprise. This has thematic repercussions, I think: the audience in the theater comes to see a display of the signs of human civilization in the body of an ass, not bestial sex; the audience of *Onos*, expecting a tale of enlightenment and transformation, will be fobbed off at the end with a sex joke and bedroom farce.

**led inside right up to me:** Somehow Meneclēs has access to the condemned women and has one brought to his house so she and the ass can become acquainted. This makes an ugly scene even uglier; in *GA*, the ass does not meet the woman until the day of the spectacle itself. Evidently, Lucius in *Onos* is prepared to go through with the sex show. But perhaps the extended story of the condemned woman at *GA* 10.23.3–10.29.2, and the statement that the willing woman was not willing to have sex with the ass in public, together suggest that there was something fuller and more plausible in the original *Metamorphoseis* that *Onos* has distorted.

## PART 10: THE SPECTACLE

*Onos* 53–55 = *GA* 10.29.3; 10.34.3–5

**The Overlap:** In both texts, the ass is led to the amphitheater in which he is to be displayed along with a condemned woman. He is to lie with her on a bed inlaid with Indian tortoiseshell; the ass imagines that wild animals exhibited for the entertainment may tear him apart.

**Key Divergences:** The differences are vast, more than the fact that at *GA* 10.35.1–5 Lucius never enters the amphitheater but escapes, running to the shore at Cenchreae. In *GA*, an elaborate mime presentation of the Judgment of Paris is described in loving detail (10.29.4–10.34.2); the ass only observes it from the wings, then runs away in disgust, because he knows that he is supposed to rape the condemned woman. In *Onos*, the ass is actually displayed on the bed with the woman (we are not told that she is naked), but the focus is on the display of his eating and drinking abilities: the audience will watch him recline and dine, and when he jumps up to eat the roses that he sees, he imagines that the audience is expecting him to dance. In *Onos*, the transformation back to human form takes place in a public amphitheater in Thessalonice, which is not Lucius's home; Lucius explains himself to the governor, who is a family friend. In Book 11 of *GA*, the transformation takes place in the middle of a procession of Isis worshippers, in the presence of a priest, in Lucius's hometown of Corinth. Here, in *Onos*, Lucius claims to be from Patras. And of course, Lucius's transformation in *GA* is the beginning of his initiations into the priesthood of Isis and into the worship of Osiris; whatever religious miracle concluded the *Metamorphoseis* has been embraced and amplified in *GA* and jettisoned in *Onos*.

### SECTION FIFTY-THREE

(cf. *GA* 10.29.3, 10.34.3–5; 10.29.4–10.34.2, the Judgment of Paris, is unparalleled)

The tortoiseshell bed is the same; so is the ass's fear that he will be eaten by wild animals. *GA* alone mentions a parade of citizens who accompany the ass to the amphitheater. But there are two crucial differences. First, *GA* focuses on the ass's disgust in anticipating having to have sex with a wicked woman in public; *Onos* concentrates on a dining scene, the food and the pretty boys there to pour the wine (for a parallel to this, consider the servers at Byrrhaena's banquet at *GA* 2.19.3). It is the ass's fame for eating and drinking like a man, not his sexual adventures (which the public does not know about), that is central here. *GA* 10.34.3–5 is worth quoting in full: "Now look at this! A soldier strides off down the middle of the street to fetch out from the public jail the woman whom the people are demanding, the one who was condemned to the beasts, as I've said, for her manifold murders, doomed to a distinguished wedding—to me. And now the marriage bed, soon to be our bed, don't you know, was being laid for us, made for us: lambent veneers of Indian tortoiseshell, puffy piles of plume-filled pillows, floral silken coverlets brightly colored. And as for me—to say nothing of my shame at engaging in intercourse in public, to say nothing of my contamination at the hands of that polluted woman, doomed and damned, it was the fear of death that I found particularly excruciating with some such thought as this in mind: if the two of us—in the embrace of Venus, don't you know—are clinging to each other, then, whatever beast is released for this woman's destruction, it could not possibly prove to be so sophisticated and discerning, so skillfully trained or so morally abstemious, as to rip to shreds the woman glued to my side but spare me on the grounds that I am the unconvicted, innocent party."

Second, the ass in *Onos* is actually displayed in the amphitheater. He does lie down with the woman, and it seems from what Meneclēs says in confidence to the overseer at

52 that the sexual part of the display will come as a complete surprise to the audience. In *GA* 10.34.6, the ass runs away, down to the shores at Cencreae, and at that point the two stories officially part ways.

## SECTION FIFTY-FOUR

At this point, we are beyond the range of *GA* and there are no real parallels, though Lucius does eat roses and regain his shape at *GA* 11.13.2–6.

**that face-of-a-beast falls down off me:** Lucius here is stunningly, disappointingly brief; we would like to hear more about Lucius himself and his inner man. Why no moment of introspection, no time spent to catalogue his changes? *Onos* hurries away from the moment of metamorphosis, which exposes Lucius to a possible death sentence, to focus on the hostile audience: Should they kill him now as a magician or wait for exculpatory evidence? His response to his change: Don't blame me!

Lucius's metamorphosis at *GA* 11.13 is worth quoting in full by way of contrast: "Then I, frightened out of my wits, my heart throbbing, relentlessly hammering—I grabbed that crown, woven of delightful, red-flashing roses; I grabbed it with my greedy mouth and swallowed it down, longing for the promise. And I was not deceived in that heavenly promise: straightaway my inhumanly transformed feral façade melts away. First of all, the bristling hair pours off of me, and then my thick skin thins out; my bulging stomach subsides; the soles of my feet extend through my hooves and end in toes; my hands are no longer feet but stretch their fingers out in their official functions; my protruding neck compresses itself; my mouth and my head return to roundness; my hideously large ears rediscover their former petiteness; my millstone molars recede to a human diminution; and, the thing that had earlier been my particular crucifixion, my tail was nowhere to be found! The people are astounded at, and the priests

are in holy awe of, the power of the highest divinity made so manifest, the munificence that matched those midnight apparitions, the effortless metamorphosis; and then, in a clear, harmonious, and unanimous voice, with their hands upstretched to the heavens, they bear witness to the great and glorious goodness of the goddess.”

**some kind of evil shape-shifter:** The ass had been afraid before that he could regain his shape and lose his life at the hands of people fearing him as some sort of a wizard (*GA* 3.29.6–7) or that he could act too human while an ass and be killed as an evil omen (*GA* 10.17.5).

**he just happened to be present at this spectacle:** “Rarely has an anticipated sexual act in literature been so cynically implicated in the maintenance of ruling-class economic and political power” (Hall, 56).

**telling him from down below:** The governor is not sitting at ground level, of course.

**Thessalian woman:** In *GA*, Lucius at the end of his ordeal dares not be so particular as to speak in public about the specific women responsible for his transformation into an ass. There the man-turned-ass has achieved a sort of mythic/symbolic status from which only the goddess Isis can redeem him. (But note that at *GA* 11.20.6, Lucius as narrator does refer to Photis: “the slave boys I had left there coming from Hypata, where Photis first put the halter on my head and led me into labyrinthine evil”; see the note in the following section.) In *Onos*, it is as simple as saying that the witch’s spell is broken. Thessaly provides the story’s frame in *Onos*; now only the comic epilogue remains.

**had rubbed an enchanted oil on me:** This refers to *Onos* 12–13, where a different verb is used (“smearing”).

## SECTION FIFTY-FIVE

This section does not parallel a specific section in *GA*, but in the course of Book 11, the transformed Lucius is reunited with his family, and such parallels are given in the notes.

**governor:** He will soon be called a judge. *Onos* is not paying close and consistent attention to the terminology of bureaucracy; in essence, Lucius, a Roman citizen, is presenting his papers, as he did to Hipparchus when he first arrived in Hypata. In *GA*, his transformation takes place in the presence of a priest of Isis, and it is the priest who explains to a mute Lucius who he really is and how he has come to be there (*GA* 11.14–15), without any reference to witches.

**whatever relations you claim to have by birth:** The point is that such a person, appearing magically, may reasonably be presumed to have no biological relations at all.

**My father's name is Lucius:** Some have presumed a gap in the text in which the father's name was lost, and that the ass gave his own name as Lucius. Note that in *GA* 11.13–14, Lucius says nothing of his family, makes no speech, and gives no explanation when transformed; in fact, the narrator of Book 11 gives us Lucius's direct speech almost exclusively in the form of two prayers (11.2, to the Queen of Heaven, when in despair on the shore at Cenchreae; and 11.25, a prayer of praise and hope of mercy spoken to the statue of Isis before his departure to Rome).

**my brother arrived:** In *GA* 11.18.1–3, the transformed Lucius is met by a retinue of family and friends (remember, Corinth is his hometown in that text; his last act before leaving for Rome, after so many initiations, is finally to visit his parents' house [*GA* 11.26.1]), but there is no mention of a brother: "Finally, the members of my family, the domestic staff, and those who were tightest knit to me by the bond of blood, abandon the attitude of mourning they had adopted from the false report of my death and come posthaste, overjoyed in their sudden rapture, each with a

different gift in hand, to examine me right then and there, now in the light of day—me, back from the land of the dead. And as for me, I am brought back to life by their *fac-es*, for I had given up hope of seeing them again. The gifts that they were decent enough to bring I am glad enough to accept; after all, they were my friends, and they had forethoughtfully seen to it to provide me the wherewithal for generous expenditures for clothing and upkeep.” At GA 11.20.6, the slave boys left behind at Hypata arrive, bringing along with them Lucius’s white horse, which had also passed through many owners: “And then, whom should I see but the slave boys I had left there coming from Hypata, where Photis first put the halter on my head and led me into labyrinthine evil; they’d heard all the tales told about me, don’t you know, and they’d even brought that horse of mine along with them: he’d been sold from one owner to another, but they recognized the markings on his back and so reclaimed him.”

**it was then . . . it was then:** The repetition of this phrase reflects the repetition in the Greek.

**determined on a ship:** Here is how Lucius sails to Rome in GA 11.26.1: “I lingered there a considerable time, in a long-winded, long-winding speech of thanksgiving; but all the same, finally, I leave. I head off, taking a direct route, intending to revisit the hearth and home of my fathers after my good long absence. Then, after a few days, prodded by the power of the goddess, I bundle together my little bags and bales in a hurry, get on board ship, and set a return course for Rome.” Tilg (14–18) argues convincingly that, starting at GA 11.26.2 and continuing to the end, Apuleius adds his own Roman conclusion to the existing Greek narrative in *Metamorphoseis*.

## PART 11: STORISENDE

### *Onos* 56

This concluding section bears no direct resemblance to anything in *GA*, though the notes will point out by way of contrast the different ways in which the two stories end.

#### SECTION 56

**enraptured:** The translation is in parallel to the vocabulary in *Onos* 51.

**Nemesis:** Here in her proper role as goddess of retribution; when she appeared in Section 35, she was a poor substitute for Fortune.

**her myrrh bottle:** Evidently the same bottle as in *Onos* 51, which was used when they were in the ass's bedroom.

**my dearest roses:** Unlike Lucius in *GA*, Lucius in *Onos* has no person to thank for his transformation (no priest, no Isis).

**I'm standing there naked:** The translation tries to make it clear that Lucius is doing here what the woman was doing in *Onos* 51.

**the ass that was you:** Lucius speaks of the human that was *in* him, and when he was *in* the ass; the woman speaks of the ass that *was* him. This story ends with a comic treatment of the ontological question that Lucius had raised when he wanted to experiment with shape-shifting back in Section 13 when in the magic workshop of Hipparchus's wife: "You see, I wanted to learn by experience whether, after I had changed from my human shape, I would be a bird in soul as well." An ass was a poor substitute for that experiment. It could seem that he retained the soul of an ass, being described at the end of his journey as a primarily

sexual creature; or, when he regained his human shape, his transformation brought him no enlightenment—the human nature he preserved was merely human.

**her slave boys:** At *GA* 10.20.2, she had four eunuchs arrange the bed and pillows for their first meeting.

**sacrifices to the Savior Gods:** Of course, Lucius in *GA* becomes a devotee of Isis; curiously, for all of his initiations in Book 11, he never actually offers sacrifices.

**the dog who stuck his ass out:** Literally, “from the asshole of a dog.” The proverb evidently has to do with a squatting dog poked by a reed—a dog who learned to mind his own business.

**from the ass who stuck his nose in:** Literally, “from the busybodiness of an ass.” In both our texts (*GA* 9.42.4; *Onos* 45, end) the proverbial ass in the attic sticks his nose *out*. In deference, however, to the theme in *The Golden Ass* of the risks of curiosity (*curiositas*, translated there as “sticking one’s nose in”), I took a liberty. In short, Lucius here says that he was saved not from his overabundance of caution but from his overabundance of curiosity.

The earliest manuscript of *Onos* has this subscription: *Lucian’s Epitome of the Metamorphoses of Lucius*. It is not clear what the scribe wanted the word *epitome* to mean; it is certainly not an epitome in our sense. The term is most often applied in antiquity to historical compilations; it is not a useful term for the ancient novel/romance (Tilg, 10).

# Index

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This index is to the translation only and is keyed to the section numbers of the Greek text, not to the page numbers.

As compared to *The Golden Ass*, *Onos* is ceaselessly focused on Lucius, and nearly every paragraph is about him in one way or another. The Index begins with him; other alphabetically arranged entries follow. These initial categories may also serve as a useful if impressionistic synopsis of the text.

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